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ABSTRACT

A practicum was implemented over an 8-month period to improve the literacy development of sixth-grade poor readers in a regular classroom. The primary goals were to empower sixth-grade classroom teachers in supporting literacy development, to strengthen the communication bond between parents and teachers, and to increase parental involvement in the educational process. The staff development and parent involvement sessions were organized based on the needs of the classroom teachers and parents and offered 35 hours of professional in-service and 3 hours of parent in-service. The theme of the sessions was "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading to Poor Readers in the Regular Classroom." Results indicated that parents would be able to support the literacy development of children in school and at home if they were provided with inservice based on a needs assessment. Teachers and parents also strengthened their ability to work together as partners in support of children's learning. (Fifteen tables of data are included and 41 references are attached. Appendixes include 10 surveys, and components of the parent and staff development sessions.) (MG)

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Supporting the Literacy Development of Sixth Grade Poor Readers in a Regular Classroom Through Teacher Inservice and Parental Involvement

by

Wilhelmenia Edwards Speights

Cluster 29

A Practicum II Report presented to the Ed.D. Program in
Early and Middle Childhood in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

Nova University

1991

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

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This practicum report was submitted by Wilhelmenia Edwards Speights under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova University.

Approved:

April 18, 1991
Date of Final Approval of Report

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William Anderson, Ed.D., Adviser

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iii

TABLE OF CONTENTS iv

LIST OF TABLES v

ABSTRACT vi

Chapter

I. INTRODUCTION 1

- Description of Work Setting and Community 1
- Writer's Work Setting and Role 7

II. STUDY OF THE PROBLEM 9

- Problem Description 9
- Problem Documentation 12
- Causative Analysis 19
- Relationship of the Problem to the Literature 36

III. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS 41

- Goals and Expectations 41
- Behavioral Objectives 41
- Measurement of Objectives 42

IV. SOLUTION STRATEGY 44

- Discussion of Evaluation of Solutions 44
- Description of Selected Solutions 51
- Report of Actions Taken 52

V. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS 76

- Results 76
- Conclusion 107
- Recommendations 116
- Dissemination 118

REFERENCES 119

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1 Percentage of Students Considered as "At-Risk" The 1st and 2nd Six-Weeks 13

2 Teacher Needs Assessment Results 14

3 Staff Development Needs Assessment Results 17

4 Parent Reading Involvement Results 19

5 Teacher Attendance Results 76

6 Monthly Reading Aloud To Students Results 83

7 Monthly Correspondence To Parents With Positive Comments Results 87

8 Parent Attendance Results 89

9 Discipline in The Reading Program Results 93

10 New Approaches of Reading Instruction Results 94

11 How Parents Can Help Their Children In The Educational Process Results 96

12 Using the Library to Support Literacy in The Regular Classroom Results 97

13 The Technology Connection Results 99

14 When To Use Your Colleagues and Other Professionals In The Educational Process Results 102

15 Staff Development Component Results - New Approaches and Strategies for Teaching Reading 106

Appendices - Page

A SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT CARD STANDARDS 123

B PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY 125

C STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY 127

D TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY 131

E STAFF DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR PLAN 133

F LOG BOOKLET 137

G SAMPLE LETTER FORM TO PARENTS CONCERNING A STUDENTS' PERFORMANCE IN SCHOOL 143

H SAMPLE OF THE "FLIP BOOK" STRATEGY AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER 146

I SAMPLE OF MONTHLY "CALENDAR OF SKILLS" STRATEGY 157

J DISCIPLINE IN THE READING PROGRAM SESSION SURVEY 161

K NEW APPROACHES OF READING INSTRUCTION SESSION SURVEY AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER 163

L HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS SESSION SURVEY 167

M USING THE LIBRARY TO SUPPORT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM SESSION SURVEY 169

N THE TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION SESSION SURVEY 171

O WHEN TO USE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS SESSION SURVEY 173

P HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS SESSION SURVEY 175

Q STAFF DEVELOPMENT COMPONENTS - NEW APPROACHES AND STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING READING 177

Abstract

Supporting the Literacy Development of Sixth Grade Poor Readers in a Regular Classroom Through Teacher Inservice and Parental Involvement. Speights, Wilhelmenia E., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University, Ed.D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Curriculum/Psychology/ Remedial Education/Staff Development/Parental Involvement/ Reading Instruction/Middle School Programs/Parent-Teacher Communications/Fund-raising.

This practicum was designed to improve the literacy development of sixth grade poor readers in a regular classroom. The primary goals were to empower sixth grade classroom teachers in supporting literacy development, to strengthen the communication bond between parents and teachers, and to increase parental involvement in the educational process.

The writer developed and organized staff development and parent involvement sessions based on the needs of classroom teachers and parents, recruited speakers for the sessions, designed sample strategies when applicable, supervised and monitored teachers in the classroom using the strategies acquired, and designed and administered the evaluation components. The sessions offered 35 hours of professional inservice and three hours of parent inservice. The parents were motivated by receiving a letter from their children concerning the opportunity to become involved in their educational programs. The teachers met in homes away from the school environment, where they had the chance to interact professionally in a relaxed atmosphere, which stimulated interest and sharing in topics such as: New Approaches of Reading Instruction, How Parents Can Help Their Children In The Educational Process, How To Communicate With Parents In The Educational Process, Using The Library To Teach Reading In The Regular Classroom, Using the Technology Connection In The Regular Classroom For Reading Instruction, The Use of Classroom Management Strategies To Stop Inappropriate Behaviors In The Classroom, When To Use Other Professionals In The Educational Process, and How To Recognize and Work With Students Diagnosed as Having "Attention Deficit Disorders." The overall implementation of the program was for eight months.

The results of the practicum were positive. The analysis revealed that by providing teachers and parents inservice based on a needs assessment, they would be able to support the literacy development of children in school and at home. Also, they strengthened their ability to work together as partners in support of children's learning.

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Description of Work Setting and Community

The setting is a new middle school facility housing sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students. The school is unique in that the student body is a mixture of rural, middle, and shrimp fishermen's children and the Navy children who have experienced cities and towns in a variety of locales.

The county, located in the southeastern part of the United States , is named for the Earl of Camden, Charles Pratt, Chief Justice Lord Chancelor of England in the late 1700's. The early economy of the county was based on sugar cane, rice, and cotton. In addition to the agriculture interest, the fishing industry also developed with emphasis on shell fishing. In the 1950's, a well-established paper company acquired land in the county and began to develop the local pulp wood and paper industry. Shortly after the acquisition of the land, the firm built a sprawling paper mill and still later a kraft bag manufacturing facility. With the opening of the Kraft bag plant, the paper company became the county's largest employer and as such a major force in the local economy. The paper company was to remain the dominant force in all aspects of local life until the arrival of the Navy in 1978.

In May 1979, the base was selected by the Navy as the preferred site for an east coast base to support future generations of strategic submarines. In October of 1980, the Secretary of the Navy announced the decision that the base would become the Atlantic home port for the new Ohio Class Submarines. The basing decision touched off a building project of vastly greater proportions. As of April 1989, there were approximately 15,000 persons attached to the military reservation. The 1980 census listed the population of the county as 13,271 persons. A special census conducted in 1987 listed the population as 22,220 persons and that figure is being disputed as too low as of May 1990, due to the arrival of the Tennessee.

The local community in the recent past geographically isolated and hence insulated, has undergone a social trauma with the building of the submarine base. The influx of thousands of people from all over the world as well as all over the country, has added much anxieties to this once small homely community.

The community only recently has taken an active role in the education of its youth. First, the local "Lions Club" provides a "Quest Program," designed to meet the needs of adolescents in the areas of current health issues, sex education, survival techniques, and self-motivational strategies. Second, the local school district with the support of the community provides "Lt. Montel Williams," a motivator for education, to speak to students and parents concerning the importance of a good education and their roles as parents. Finally, the "Kiwanis Foundation," an auxiliary of the Navy, provides the "Terrific Kids Program," to foster improvement in the areas of discipline, academics, and goal attainment. Students are given contracts by their teachers, whereby they must adhere for six weeks. At the end of the six weeks, if the objectives are met with 90% accuracy, the students receive a "Terrific Kids" certificate. The certificate entitles them to free meals in restaurants, reduced prices in department and clothing stores, and recognition in the local newspaper.

The programs offered in the setting are comprehensive in design and meet both local and state objectives. But no remedial services such as Chapter I, are available for the students who have been identified as "at-risk" or working below grade levels in reading and other related subjects.

The students classified as "at-risk" in the setting are those who have failed to receive 77% or above on their report cards during the preceding marking period. This definition of "at-risk" students was determined and presented to the school by the vice principal in charge of curriculum. Also, the scores obtained from the Criterion Reference Test (CRT) and the Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich Reading and Cumulative Tests are used to determine if the students are achieving below grade level in reading and other related subjects. The school does not consider teachers' judgment a major factor in identifying who is genuinely "at-risk." As a result, many children do remain "at-risk" each six weeks according to this predetermined standard of expectation.

As for the writer, the definition of "at-risk" students take on a new description and identity. They are the children who have been retained one or more times or are over age for a sixth grader, who have received two or more failing grades on their report cards during the preceding marking period, who have shown no signs of progress as a reader/writer over the past six months or so in the teacher's judgment, and whose parents have had no direct contact with the school over the past six months. According to Curban (1989), "at-risk" students are those who have experienced much difficulty in their academic growth and development. He also concluded that the achievement problems of these students were due to the structure of the school not meeting the students' individual differences and needs.

However, resource teachers do exist in other schools in the district to teach Chapter I classes. They provide remedial services in the areas of reading and math. The programs are funded for disadvantaged children through federal funds.

In the setting, the socio-economic status of the children is highly difficult to obtain. Since over 60% of the student population is Navy, the rural and fishermen parents have become very relaxed and out of touch with their children's school. Filling out forms, attending school meetings and other functions, have become a constant battle between the school and the parents. Nevertheless, the Navy parents, who highly emphasize creativity, modern education, and computer technologies, are also reluctant to present their incomes. Not realizing the dilemma this puts the school in, and that federal programs require this kind of information for assistance, everyone remains unyielding to the situation. As a result, remedial services are not provided to promote students' growth in literacy development.

The sixth grade total enrollment as of this date, is 209 students. This figure fluctuates due to frequent transfers of Navy families. Thirty of these students were retained at least once before reaching the sixth grade and five of these students were retained twice before reaching the sixth grade. Twenty-one of the students were boys and nine were girls.

The school staff is comprised of young energetic teachers and administrators who are endowed with fresh new ideas. Most of them have matriculated to nearby colleges and universities in preparation of the Master's and Specialist's degrees in education. They work together frequently in collaborative meetings to discuss current issues and to solve any problems. The teachers hold weekly team meetings to discuss students' problems and other related issues. Frequent informal gatherings such as breakfast brunches, holiday parties, after-school rushes, and much more maintain school harmony among teachers and staff.

Several curriculum reforms have been implemented in the school district. First, "The Middle School Incentive Grant" provides funds for schools where 80% of the teachers have had special middle school training. Second, "The Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act" was established throughout the state to insure a uniformed curriculum. Third, the new middle school design of grade levels and teams enables teachers and pupils to get to know each other well. Finally, the grade levels are supervised by grade chairpersons, who oversee the curriculum, and handle student discipline and other educational assignments that are made by the principal.

The school's philosophy is to educate all children to reach their potentials by:

1. Helping students to understand themselves as unique human individuals with personal needs and shared social responsibilities.
2. Promoting maximum individual growth in the basic learning skill areas of reading, writing, and computing.
3. Assuring every student a maximum degree of success in acquiring a body of knowledge in understanding the areas of organized learning.
4. Emphasizing the understanding of language arts, social studies, science, and mathematics.
5. Providing exploration in the unified arts, chorus, home economics, art, industrial arts, career education, and other areas of personal interest.
6. Fostering independent, self-directed learning on the part of every student.
7. Guiding students in the formulation of attitudes and values.
8. Integrating knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values through a team-teaching, interdisciplinary approach to instruction.
9. Offering non-competitive opportunities for physical development.

The school district offers in-service training according to the needs of teachers and staff. In-service in reading instruction has been provided in the following areas: Reading In The Content Area, and The Teaching of Reading. The sessions are offered at least twice a year according to teacher needs. Very few teachers sign-up for staff development courses because they are often held at inconvenient times.

The people involved in the Practicum II implementation are from rural, fishing, and Naval communities. They are eight sixth grade teachers, parents of "at-risk" students and poor readers, director of staff development, and other consultants and professionals.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer is certified in elementary education, middle grades, and specific learning disabilities at the master's level. In the work setting the writer performs the following duties and responsibilities:

1. Sixth grade chairperson (leadership, discipline, and curriculum).
2. Assist the principal and vice principal in overall school related decisions and act as a lead teacher in their absence.
3. County and school representative for textbook adoptions.
4. County and school representative for retention policies.
5. Meets and instructs assigned classes in the location at the times designated (reading, language arts, and math).

6. Develops and maintains a classroom environment conducive to effective learning within the limits of the resources provided by the district.

7. Prepares for classes assigned and shows written evidence of preparation upon request of any supervisor.

8. Evaluates students on a regular basis, always being consistent.

9. Maintains accurate, complete, and correct records as required by the district policy and the law.

10. Assists in upholding and enforcing school rules.

11. Make conferences with parents.

12. Attends grade chairperson, faculty, and grade level meetings.

13. Attends workshops, seminars, staff development, and universities to improve teacher effectiveness and self-professional growth.

CHAPTER II

Study of the Problem

Problem Description

The sixth grade students are lacking in support of literacy development to help them solve particular reading and other subject related problems. They are experiencing difficulty in performing specific reading tasks according to the results obtained from the Reading Criterion Reference Test adopted by the state. Also, they are demonstrating "at-risk" levels of performance in their content subjects (English, social studies, and science) because they have failed to achieve 77% on their report cards according to school district standards (see Appendix A).

The school offers no remedial programs and all eight teachers report difficulty in adequately servicing students' academic needs in the regular classroom. The county mandates that teachers in grades K-8 use the scope and sequence prescribed in the Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich reading program and follow specific guidelines adopted by the state for reading instruction. The students are pressured daily to master these objectives, which often hinder their reading and learning styles. Furthermore, the teachers are unhappy because they cannot communicate their enthusiasm and appreciation of reading through their attitudes. They are forced to teach the students by means of basal textbooks, worksheets, and "tons" of record keeping.

The need for parental involvement is ever prevalent in the setting. The students render frequent excuses almost daily as to why they are neglected by their parents when it comes to assignments. Some frequent excuses given were: parents did not understand the assignments, they were unskilled in the subject area, they were tired, they had to see after siblings and do chores, and some just wanted to be left alone. As a result, sixth grade parents, and especially those of "at-risk" children, were minimally involved in their children's education. This is seen by the meager number who show up at scheduled parent conferences. Of the 209 sixth graders, only 25 had a parent in attendance at the most recently scheduled parent meeting.

There are many reasons as to why this problem has not been solved. First, the students are given no real incentives to learn, and sometimes they are denied the opportunity to seek fulfillment of individual goals, because such goals are not part of the school's objectives. Second, the students from the beginning of their formal schooling have failed to achieve up to their mental capacity. There is, however, nothing concrete or definite that the teacher is able to suggest as a cause or reason for the problem. Moreover, parents and teachers become concerned, but in spite of cooperative instructional efforts, the situation does not change. The discrepancy between what the student could do and what he is doing grows greater and greater. Therefore, he can no longer engage effectively in classroom activities. Third, the students who have successful beginnings, then seem to regress. Many of them attain a normal learning pattern shortly after entering school and maintain it for a year or more before beginning to slow down. At first the change is very gradual; then, it seems to gather momentum. The students reach a point where they actually seem to regress and lose proportionately more each year. This causes concern both in the home and in the school. Conscientious teachers are prone to worry and to believe that they themselves are responsible; other instructors think the student is not trying. Parents do not know what to believe or how to help. As a result, the student becomes worried and loses confidence. Finally, the student who has suffered a sharp drop in achievement is more difficult to reclaim. The complexities caused by sudden regression can usually be found only by skilled professionals. Few classroom teachers have the teaching equipments and technical skill necessary to find and correct a condition of this nature. In most instances, the student will need the attention of a medical doctor, eye specialist, or psychologists.

Previous solutions failed because the school holds the key for making any program a success. It is up to the administrators and teachers to design and implement a program to facilitate the literacy development of the students. This means that, when appropriate, the individual child can spontaneously get involved with objects and activities that interest him. The classroom teacher must realize that they are the connecting link between a student and the instructional services that are necessary in literacy development. They should provide effective instruction or secure aid from other sources, so that each student will receive the kind of help he needs, regardless of his achievement status. Effective learning environments may require constant reorganization of classroom space to permit flow of students, access to materials, and practical use of space.

If this problem were solved, sixth grade classroom teachers would become competent in teaching reading to all students. They would be able to locate students who have reading difficulties, administer screening tests to determine the nature of a difficulty, select and use materials for correcting minor difficulties, provide special help for students who have difficulties that cannot be corrected outside of the regular classroom, make clear instructional objectives, provide lessons based on instructional levels, motivate their students to read, make good use of students' learning time, teach effectively, use methods and techniques that may be adapted to a wide range of individual differences, and be able to provide positive feedback to parents and involve them in the educational process.

The problem is: sixth grade "at-risk" students are not adequately or appropriately supported in their literacy development.

Problem Documentation

To prove that the problem existed in the setting, the writer used four surveys to gather the information (see Appendices B, C, D). The Sixth Grade "At-Risk" survey of students failing content subjects indicated that 60% of these students failed their content subjects at mid-semester. Twenty students failed reading, 26 students failed English, 37 students students failed social studies, and 43 students failed science (see Table 1).

Table 1

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS CONSIDERED AS "AT-RISK" THE 1ST AND 2ND SIX-WEEKS

#209

Reading	English	Social Studies	Science	Totals	%
20	26	37	43	126	60%

NOTE: Information was taken from the students' report cards.

Students are considered "at-risk" if they fail to achieve 77% accuracy in the content areas.

The Teacher Needs Assessment survey of the eight teachers who will be participating in the practicum indicated that eight of the teachers were aware that students were remedial and working at risk levels in their classrooms. Eight of the teachers indicated that the system did not provide remedial services in the setting. Eight of the teachers indicated that they did not provide remedial services in the regular classroom due to the lack of training, time, and space. Five of the teachers indicated that they did not communicate or receive support from parents and five of the teachers indicated that teacher inservice would be beneficial in solving this problem (see Table 2).

Table 2

TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY - SIXTH GRADE

	Responses			
Questions	Yes	No	Sometime	Total Number of Participants
1. Are you aware that students are performing below standard levels in reading in your class?	8			8
2. Does the school provide remedial services for these students?		8		8
3. Do you provide services in your classroom? Why?		8		8
4. Do you receive support from parents concerning student performance?	2	5	1	8
5. Do parents render involvement services such as volunteering, tutoring, or PTO?	2	5	1	8
6. Would a training inservice be beneficial to you in solving these issues?	8			8

Other ideas presented by teachers to help solve the problems were:

1. Take plenty of time during reading instruction
2. Help the students gain confidence in themselves
3. Read extensively from conventional materials

By taking plenty of time during reading instruction, the teacher supports literacy development. Interest is developed, the necessary reading skills are taught, and practice and enrichment activities are provided. They firmly believed that the more thoroughly a student is grounded in the basic skills, the greater will be his rate of progress toward gaining independence. Plenty of time and repetition will insure greater facility in using skills at a later date.

As confidence is developed, speed of improvement will result. They all agreed that knowledge of progress will do much to help the student gain confidence in himself. Therefore, visual accurate records should be kept of each student's improvement so that he will be able to realize his own attainments. When a child finds that reading is not an impossible task for him, improvements will be steady and sure. Finally, nothing can take the place of actual practice in reading. Students should read books, newspapers, children's magazines, letters, catalogs, and anything that contain words within their recognition and understanding vocabularies. They stressed that the more a student reads from materials written on his level of achievement, the more progress he will make.

When asked why they lacked confidence in inservice, they responded very positively, that time after school was not feasible and that the instructors were too demanding when it came to the follow-up activities. Also, they acknowledged that in order to make the inservice relevant to their professional needs, the inservice should be designed for teachers to implement in their classrooms. They should have less follow-up activities and more collaborative sessions held during teacher workdays or professional leave days.

The Staff Development Needs survey, of the eight teachers who will be participating in the practicum, indicated that six of the teachers had a strong need for modern approaches (*Co-operative Learning*, *Whole Language*, *Paired Reading*, *Learning Styles*, *Tutoring*, and *Questioning*). Eight of the teachers had a strong need for *Computer Assisted Instruction*. Six of the teachers had a strong need for *Effective Teaching Techniques*. Seven of the teachers had a strong need for *Assessment and Individualized Reading Instruction*. Eight of the teachers had a strong need for organizing the classroom (*Learning Centers*, *Conferences*, and *Progress Reports*). Eight of the teachers had a strong need for *Motivating Techniques* (Literature books, high interest materials, incentives, and plays). Eight of the teachers had a strong need for *Discipline* in the *Reading Program*. Seven of the teachers had a strong need for Methodology of *Teaching Reading in the Content Areas*. Seven of the teachers had a strong need for How to *Communicate and Involve Parents in the Educational Process*. Eight of the teachers had a strong need for colleague and other professional assistance and awareness (see Table 3).

Table 3

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Possible Topics

Directions: Below is a list of possible staff development topics. Please indicate how much interest you have in each one by checking one of the boxes at the left of the topic. Please feel free to add other topics in the space provided.

Level of Interest

RESPONSES

	No Need	Some Need	Strong Need	
1.		2	6	Cooperative Learning, Whole Language, Paired Reading, Learning Styles, Tutoring, and Questioning Techniques in the reading program
2.			8	Computer Assisted Instruction
3.				Nature and Needs of Middle School Learners
4.		2	6	Effective Teaching Techniques
5.				The Remedial Reader
6.		1	7	Assessment and Individualized Reading Instruction
7.			8	Organization and Management of the Classroom
8.			8	Motivating Students to Read
9.		1	7	Parental Involvement and Communication in the Reading Programs
10.				Involving the Community in the Reading Program
11.		1	7	Methodology of Teaching Reading in the Content Areas
12.			8	Working with Colleagues and other Paraprofessionals
13.				The Writing Process and Reading
14.				Utilization of Audio-Visual Aids and Equipment

Table 3 (continued)

Level of Interest

RESPONSES

	No Need	Some Need	Strong Need	
15.	____	____	____	Utilization of Test Data to Improve Instruction
				Other Topics
16.	____	____	____	____
17.	____	____	____	____
18.	____	____	____	____
19.	____	____	____	____
20.	____	____	____	____

The Parent Reading Involvement survey, taken of the 60 parents who will be participating in the practicum, indicated that 45 of the parents were not aware that their children were reading below grade levels. Thirty-nine of the parents did not communicate often with their children's teachers. Forty-seven of the parents did not get involved with school related activities. Forty of the parents did not take or make provisions to help their children with their assignments. Forty-three of the parents indicated that parental sessions and newsletters would be beneficial in solving these problems (see Table 4).

Table 4

PARENT READING INVOLVEMENT SURVEY - SIXTH GRADE

	Responses			
Questions	Yes	No	Sometime	Total Number of Participants
1. Are you aware that your child may be performing below standard levels in reading and other related subjects?	8	45	7	60
2. Do you communicate with your child's teacher in an effort to support or improve your child's performance in school?	9	39	12	60
3. Do you get involved with school related activities such as PTO, volunteering, or tutoring?	3	47	10	60
4. Do you take or make provisions to help your child with his assignments?	9	40	11	60
5. Would parental sessions and newsletters be beneficial to you in solving these issues?	43	12	5	60

Causative Analysis

The causes of the problem, in approximate order of significance according to the writer's analysis are:

1. Lack of federal assistance programs, such as Chapter I, for remedial services.
2. Lack of time to provide individualized instruction to low readers.
3. Teachers are constrained in their teaching styles because of mandated objectives from local and state guidelines.

4. Reading instruction is geared to basal textbooks, workbooks, and drill sheets.
5. Lack of materials and failure to provide literature books, trade books, newspapers, and other print to enhance the basal textbook.
6. Failure to assess the students' attitudes, interests, strengths, and weaknesses toward reading.
7. Lack of awareness in discipline strategies and modern approaches, designed for remedial and regular classroom instruction.
8. The computers in the school are not available or accessible for teacher or student utilization.
9. Lack of space in the classroom to provide learning centers, content area reading, and individualized instruction.
10. Failure to recognize the nature and needs of the middle school learner.
11. Lack of support to provide for the wide range of differences in the classroom.
12. Lack of effective parent, school, and community relationships.
13. Failure to use assessment tools in the reading program.
14. Failure to recognize the need of self in the reading process.
15. Lack of paraprofessionals, volunteers, colleagues, and other professionals in the reading process.

Teaching is a very difficult task and from the writer's point of view, it is the most difficult of all occupations. It is difficult because a teacher is assigned thirty or more students and is accountable for identifying differences and helping each child reach his potential. This is really more than one person can do. Teachers must have the help of other professionals within and outside the school system if they are to be successful.

Many school systems employ reading supervisors or reading resource teachers who are responsible for helping classroom teachers implement their reading programs. However, some schools are unfortunate in that funds are not available to provide the intensive and systematic remedial instruction that is so desperately needed to support literacy development.

Federal funds are available for federal education programs and the writer feels that the principals are responsible for seeking the funds for the schools. They should lead the way in securing the adequate funds for reading programs, materials, and other related resources. They should involve teachers in the selection and as much as possible include parents, other administrators, and the community. According to Hill (1990), Chapter I programs are still available for disadvantaged children but most school districts fail to provide the services due to federal funded guidelines. He also concluded that the federal role should not just be for providing funds but it should arouse and promote regional implementation and improve the overall operation of the system. This can be done by improving salaries, providing in-service, and recruiting teachers. He further acknowledged that Chapter I programs were pliable instruments and could operate at different levels of federal funding. But, it is up to the leaders within the system to seek further information concerning the guidelines. In this way, the guidelines could be changed to meet the local system's eligibility, so that the services could be rendered to those who are relatively in need of assistance.

A common complaint of teachers is that there are not enough hours in the day to do everything that needs to be done. Teachers get bogged down by keeping records, grading papers, securing appropriate materials, and planning lessons. In addition, during the school day there usually is not enough time to meet all the groups or work with all the individuals who need attention. Therefore, teachers must rely on their colleagues to lend a helping hand. It appears to the administrators that the only realistic solution is to lower the student load. The solution appears to be simple. Lower the class size so the teachers will have more time to spend with individual students. It is difficult to implement this solution, however, because of lack of money. Today, society speaks of an oversupply of teachers, but in reality there is an undersupply or lack of money. If more teachers could be employed to lower the class size, or if part-time teachers could be employed to help out in the reading program, time available to individual students would increase. More attention should be given to this cause, for it is simply impossible for one person to provide for the individual differences of the large group of students in elementary and middle grades today.

Teachers are constrained in their teaching styles because of mandated objectives from local and state guidelines. These objectives must be highlighted in plan books and taught by a certain time in order to meet standards. The students are rushed through skill lessons in order to meet time lines and mandated objectives. If they do not master the objectives, the students may not proceed to the next level in the text. As a result, students have poor attitudes toward reading, achievement scores on standardized test are low, and their self-esteem is at an instant low.

While basal programs provide the teacher a classroom management system it does little to foster a love for reading in the students. Teachers adhere to the teaching manual sometimes so strictly that it does not allow for any diversity at all in the answer key. Reading class becomes a set of isolated skills taught out of concept with no apparent real life importance to the child. The children are shuffled through one level to the next through a tracking system.

Unfortunately, a reading program that is geared to basal textbooks, workbooks, and drill sheets, will only trap students in a level that they do not belong in. If the level is difficult, they become frustrated and may give up trying to learn. If the level is not challenging or not allowing enough creativity for them, they become bored and will also lose interest. Thus, the tracking system labels a child at a particular ability and he/she is usually hopelessly stuck there for the remainder of his school years.

Another serious cause of the problem is failure to use children's literature, trade books, and newspapers in the reading program. Students need these materials not only to enhance their program but to provide them with an array of reading print. It is no wonder students see the reading class as unrelated to reading and are not motivated to do better. The reading program is filled with assigned reading activities, making it impossible for most children to have time for free, relaxed reading.

Duffy, Roehler, and Putman (1986) believes that more should be done to help teachers break away from leaning too heavily upon the basal text program. They feel that teachers have been brainwashed to think that this is the only approach to successful reading instruction. In the writer's opinion, the basal should only be a part of a student's reading program. Tradebooks, children's literature, and newspapers, should definitely be incorporated into the program along with enrichment activities for all students.

One of the common frustrations in teaching reading and one of the most frequently heard complaints is the lack of materials. However, today's teachers have more materials than the teachers of the past, it is still difficult to obtain sufficient materials that are motivating to students. It could be that teachers do not have enough materials to provide for the wide range of reading achievement levels in the class or simply that they do not have the variety of materials to teach and reinforce the various reading skills. Teachers cannot be expected to make or purchase all of the materials necessary for an effective reading program but encourage the principals to use your ideas when selecting reading materials.

Heathington and Alexander (1984) confirms that students cannot be motivated to work unless they have gratifying experiences with the implements of trade. In reading, this means an abundance of varied suitable books, magazines, and technologies. When satisfying materials are used, students will make progress.

Assessing attitudes, interests, strengths, and weaknesses toward reading is very important in the teaching of reading. Today, many teachers have failed to adhere to certain effective behaviors such as these. In order for a reading program to be successful, it must foster learners who read, who feel good about themselves, and about their ability to use reading to satisfy, some felt personal or informational need.

Heathington and Alexander (1984) considers poor attitudes toward reading a prime factor in low reading achievement. Whenever possible teachers should use observations, interviewing, interest surveys, and other techniques to obtain this information.

Lack of awareness in discipline strategies and modern approaches designed for remedial and regular classroom instruction in reading is tremendously needed today. In order for teachers to work with small groups of students, they must have the cooperation of all the students in the class. Cooperative behavior and independent study do not come about without training. They must learn to apply techniques for preventing and handling discipline problems, to insure the safety and success of the children in their reading program. It is impossible to have an effective reading program without effective discipline. If a teacher cannot control the students, their efforts will be in vain. More than knowledge is needed to have effective discipline in the classroom. They must feel confident as a person and teacher, have an exciting educational program based on the students' needs and interests, and value the students and their responsibility in guiding them.

Lacking in awareness of modern approaches to teach reading, will cause the teacher to feel incompetent. They may be instructing students who have characteristics different from other students in the class. Therefore, it would be essential to know how to use various reading approaches to help the students develop reading skills and grow in literacy development. According to Hollingsworth (1989), teachers lack new ideas to serve different needs and this presents a problem in the reading process. She further acknowledged that teachers should be given the opportunity to become aware of teaching approaches and instructional strategies that would enable them to teach reading more effectively.

In most modern school systems, the cause is one not so much of quantity as of suitability. But in this setting, the technologies such as televisions, computers, Dukane machines, and other technical devices are not available or accessible for teachers or student utilization. Teachers complain of not having enough equipment and teaching materials to use in their classroom instruction. The writer believes that a small amount of suitable, well-constructed materials are much more desirable than a roomful of highly advertised, but relatively useless, gadgets.

It is true that machines are being used extensively in many reading programs, and research indicate that they are superior to more conventional practice materials if they are used properly. They save time and result in a higher level of motivation for many students. However, the writer feels that teachers should concentrate more on when, how, and to what extent technology should be used rather than quantity in supplementing the regular instructional program.

Bracey (1988) conducted several surveys and read researched studies for five years. His results indicated that teachers who used technical machines in their classrooms aroused the students' curiosity toward learning. They found them very useful with gifted and special education students, but not useful for the average students. The facts that machines are growing in number and are available in most classrooms suggests that teachers should consciously try to find the best ways to use them in supporting literacy development.

Another common cause teachers mention is lack of space, ventilation, and appropriate furniture. For example, some teachers report they cannot have learning centers because there simply is not enough space. Others report it is impossible to have many different activities going on in the classroom at the same time because the students interrupt each other. What can be done? Who can help solve this situation? It is going to take some time before classroom size is expanded and until then teachers will have to think creatively about using other space. You would think that a system would consider lack of space when a brand new facility is being erected. But in this case, the classroom space was not considered at all. The library is too small to provide space for learning centers, and there are no extra classrooms. Again it is impossible to send students from regular classrooms to another classroom for practicing and reinforcing particular skills.

The organization of a classroom experience implies two things: organization of the physical environment (chairs and tables, for example) and organization of the ways in which human components work and interact. The physical environment is often comparatively static and cannot be manipulated to a large degree (as, for example, by providing additional equipment or space). However, the vital element is the human organization that provides the best possible learning situation for each student, and this can be manipulated. Duffy, Rolhler, and Putman (1987) reported that teachers lack training in classroom organizational skills. They further concluded that teachers must provide more than a single type of organizational scheme and structure. They must use the facilities that they have to the best of their abilities and secure the support from the local Parent-Teachers

Association (PTA), and business people to improve the facilities.

When a child reaches the middle grades, reading and other related activities are no longer top priority. During this period of development the child readily becomes more interested in other activities. Therefore, the school that does not recognize the nature and needs of the middle school learner, fails to support their literacy development. At the middle school level the curriculum, teachers, and media specialists become more rigid and structured. The curriculum is composed of textbooks and mimeographed worksheets.

What happened to the role models? Does a teacher ever read with the class or to the class? Are there periods of sustained reading? Nevertheless, early adolescents are developing long-term attitudes toward the role of education in their lives. It is particularly important that educators, especially, should understand that they are indirectly influenced by external factors as school experiences, family interactions, peers, and general social trends. They live in a complex world and to a great extent are shaped by the world. The adolescents need middle schools whose staff and programs are sensitive to these changes. But being sensitive to the special needs of young adolescents does not necessarily imply making total accommodations to them. In fact, growth comes about only when there is sufficient tension between the individual and the environment. The staff and the programs of effective middle schools should also challenge the young. In sum, an excellent middle school is one that responds to the special developmental needs of young adolescents, while at the same time provide sufficient and tension for growth to occur.

According to Anderson (1988) middle grade students often become complacent and do not view their reading improvement as a top priority. He further acknowledged that many middle grade students come to their content subject classes (English, social studies, and science) demonstrating below grade level in reading and could profit from extra help and services devoted to instruction and practice in reading. Finally, he advocates advisory or homeroom periods so that students may discuss social relationships, peer groups, health issues, moral or ethical issues, and values.

Perhaps the most preplexing cause of this problem in the teaching of reading is the fact that there is a wide-range of individual differences, and the range continues to increase with effective instruction. In other words, the more effective a teacher becomes, the more difficult their job becomes because the differences among the students become greater. No other occupation requires the worker to provide for individual differences of some thirty learners. Teachers are not fortunate in their profession and they are considered as "super teachers," in the eyes of the writer. They must attend to the individual differences of all students in their classrooms in order to keep their jobs. Pressures are applied by principals, parents, and other administrators. Instead, the principal and other administrators should realize the need for meeting individual differences and inform the teachers of the resources available in the community and lead the way in helping students take advantage of them. As educators, we must remember, it is necessary not only to identify the causes but also to remediate them in the most appropriate way.

In too many middle schools, good parent, teacher, and community relationships are distorted. The distorted view leads to misguided attempts to cover up problems and to sell the school like a commercial product. Excellent middle schools have good community relationships but those healthy relationships come about from a sincere desire to work closely and communicate openly with parents and the community.

The educational process begins as early as the child is able to recognize and identify pictures. Having a parent communicate ideas and read stories are vital to the process, also. Many children live in a one or two parent home, where employment limits the parents in their involvement of school activities. Children need someone to model good habits. If they rarely see their parents read, most likely they will not read either. Parents are one of the most important factors influencing achievement of children. Many research studies have indicated that children who come from homes in which parents have accepted their responsibilities for helping the child in school, achieve at higher levels than children who do not have the encouragement and aid. Hewison and Tizard (1980) found that the home factors which emerged as most strongly relating to achievement was whether or not the parents heard the child read. The 80% gains in achievement were due to the parents' interest in the child's reading process.

The changing family structure has complicated the school's effort of communicating with them. As the writer mentioned earlier, in many families, both are likely to be working full-time outside of the home. It has thus become very difficult to call parents at home and get parents to come to school during the day for conferences. It is even very difficult to get good attendance at evening meetings; working parents want to relax in the evening and spend time with their children, not attend Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. They just want to be left alone.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) concluded that poor readers exist because parents fail to be good models of reading. They take a passive role in their education because of the stresses involved in their everyday lives.

The argument for good school-community relationships can be made from both grounds of principle and practice. The schools belong to the people and are expected to serve the larger interests of the society. Both those principles of public ownership and societal responsibility require that schools be closely linked with and responsive to the communities they serve.

Instead, the school leaders are not focusing on the essential tasks of educating children. Their energies are involved in dealing with community tension and conflict. They are battling with each other over positions in the schools and the central office. This was highly prevalent in this setting. Principals and vice principals became disoriented with each other. The faculty lost morale, parents became unhappy and frustrated, and the community as a whole received the wrong message about the nature of the school.

When parents and other citizens are fully informed about their schools, they can make decisions about educational matters. When parents feel positive about their schools, they experience a sense of satisfaction about an important aspect of their lives and their children's lives. When there is general support for and pride in the schools, the community itself becomes a more attractive place to live, and the students learn an important message about the nature of school and society.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) also acknowledges that schools pay more attention to why parents and the community are not involved in the reading process. Instead, efforts should be geared toward developing methods and procedures to keep them informed and functioning in the process.

Testing and evaluation can assist teachers in the decision-making process as they attempt to improve instruction for students. The data can also indicate if reading growth has not occurred, which is an indication that adjustments need to be made. This information also permits the teachers to make professional judgments about the appropriateness of their educational efforts, increases accountability to themselves, students, and the community at large.

Instead, teachers cannot find the time to complete informal assessments in the classroom. Therefore, they must use the results of state adopted reading placement tests that indicate predetermined expectancies correlated for that series. Students are not, in most cases, being taught at their instructional levels, which presents many problems in the classroom. Cairney and Langbien (1989) acknowledges that poor readers are given materials at their frustration level in comparison to high ability students who receive their instruction at the instructional level.

Students' reading behavior is regulated by their image of themselves as readers. This behavior is often displayed when students read passages aloud. They may read the first few sentences flawlessly, but instead of thinking that they are improving, they may regard their good performance as a matter of luck rather than a skill. The writer has experienced this in teaching remedial, disinterested, and discouraged readers. These misreadings remind them that they are, after all, poor readers. Rapidly, their confidence drains away and they stumble through the remainder of the text, hurrying to finish like a person running to win a race.

Students will participate actively and willingly in reading activities and will read extensively on their own if they believe that they are capable of succeeding. Teachers must instill this high level of self-concept by words of praise, pat on the backs, and plenty of constructive criticism. The students must be able to understand positive criticism and that their teachers are not rejecting them.

Jongsma (1990) considers negative comments a cause for non-success of poor readers. He feels that every attempt should be given to foster objectively on the students' performance rather than make global remarks. As a result, the students themselves will conclude that they did a good job on the activity.

Finally, where are the volunteers? Where are the paraprofessionals and other colleagues in the reading process? They rarely exist in the middle school settings. More and more middle schools are not providing paraprofessionals (aides) at this level because they feel that the need is greater at the elementary level and the organizational structure of the schools prevent colleagues and other professionals from assisting in the educational process. Teaching is not a job for loners. They need all the assistance they can receive in order to teach the children to read.

Volunteers are so few and the need is enormous! School volunteers, whether they be parents, grandparents, older students, or other citizens, can help teachers provide for individual differences by assuming some of the responsibilities such as making materials, directing practice and reinforcement activities and much more.

In order to support the literacy development in the middle schools, this cause must be rectified immediately. The schools must recognize, that students are students regardless of their ages. They must realize that at all ages, the students will display special needs, interests, and individual differences. In order to meet these differences, they must provide or seek the help of volunteers, paraprofessionals, colleagues, and other professionals to help provide for the differences among the students.

According to Topping (1989), students of all ages can gain from an association with volunteers. He also stresses that the school must try, in every way possible, to match the ability of the citizen with the students' needs. In this way, the volunteers work under a more organized structure and gains can be seen from the tutor participation in the reading process.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

In view of the literature, the writer will focus on information that will reveal some evidence and possible explanations as to why students are not supported in their literacy development.

As the writer visits classrooms and talks to children, it becomes abundantly clear that many students are asked to read materials that are much too difficult. Not only are their reading textbooks too challenging but also their social studies and science texts are written at even more advanced levels. It is an unfortunate truism that many students are required to read materials daily that are too advanced for them. Such requests soon lead to frustration, anger, and frequently, inappropriate behavior.

Schmitt (1990) regards good readers as those who can function with much success in the reading process. They can read almost any materials given to them. They can apply strategies that will allow them not to become frustrated or disinterested in the written text. She also acknowledges that when inappropriate materials are given to students, this slows down the learning process which leads to poor comprehenders.

It is important to understand the necessity of placing students at the correct reading level. Being able to recognize the majority of words and to comprehend meanings frees students to use additional energies to decode occasional unfamiliar words. But being forced to apply continually a host of word identification skills in every sentence will soon lead to a rejection of reading. Unless the student is given the time to read materials on their level, it is unrealistic to expect literacy growth.

Monolakes (1988) acknowledged that poor readers encounter inabilities to bring past information and experiences to the printed page. They lack the necessary skills in reading that are needed for breaking down the material into component parts. Therefore, it is difficult to accept the idea that all individuals should learn the same material at the same rate. He further conveys that teachers must be sensitive to the fact that many students need additional skills, and that they as teachers must stop gearing their instructional pace to only the average learner.

According to Pogrow (1990), "at-risk" students suffer from an extreme deficit of short and long term memories. They tend to forget easily the skills that were taught on their application of these skills were very poor. He further concluded that at-risk students experience much difficulty in the regular classroom because they could not understand the written material.

Since reading is an essential tool, all teachers who make use of printed materials as teaching aids have the responsibility for increasing the student's ability to use that tool. This is lacking in the middle schools today. They are mandated by the state and local systems to teach specific objectives by specific guidelines, adopted manuals, and have very little supplementary materials to complete the job. They lack organizational ability, diagnostic ability, knowledge of the reading process, and consistency of purpose in the reading process. However, Duffy, Roehler, and Putman (1987) reported that teachers play major roles in the classroom when they are more effective. They set the tone for the students to be successful in reading, while in another class, the students might fail if the teacher lack the competencies in the teaching of reading to all students. They further acknowledged that good teachers of reading spend time planning, assigning, and supervising reading lessons and instructional time and pace are carefully adjusted for the students. They firmly believe that the classroom has a good learning atmosphere and that the conditions for learning are carefully controlled by the teacher.

Traditionally, educators have perceived the teaching of reading as the undisputed province of the school, generally ignoring their most effective and accessible source of help, the parents.

Middle grade students constantly complain about the need of parental involvement in their studies. They feel rejected and jealous of their younger siblings because of the attention they receive. In the home they have to contend with the constant reprimands, their parents' negative responses, and all of the massive confusion that exists. The students feel that they are fighting a losing battle. They receive restrictions due to low achievement, behavior, and defeated attitudes. Research by Meredith and Bennings (1979), found that parents of underachieving readers were applying inordinate pressures, displaying conflicting interparent reactions, and being inconsistent and ambiguous. They revealed that reading takes on a new dimension for children when parents and teachers truly become partners in this crucial learning area.

Henderson (1988) further believes that the lack of parental involvement in schools create poor achievers in school. Parents who show interest in their child generally motivate the child to do well in school activities.

In summary, the teacher must realize that the reading program is a vital antidote of the reading process. They must have an awareness that "at-risk" students and poor readers will require more structure, challenging experiences, modifications, parental involvement, individualized instructional leadership to achieve in the academic areas. Also, the teacher must be willing to acquire this knowledge through staff development, college courses, or some form of inservice, so that the needs of these students will be met in the regular classroom.

CHAPTER III

Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The following goals were projected for this practicum:

1. To empower classroom teachers in supporting literacy development processes for all sixth grade students.

2. To strengthen the communication bond between parents and teachers.

3. To increase parental involvement in the educational process.

Behavioral Objectives

The specific objectives of the practicum were:

1. Eight sixth grade teachers will voluntarily participate in seven five-hour inservice sessions on, "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading to Poor Readers in the Regular Classroom."

2. Given inservice sessions on, "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading to Poor Readers in the Regular Classroom," eight, sixth grade teachers will be able to describe at least two new strategies that they have tried with success in their classroom.

3. Eight sixth grade teachers will report monthly reading aloud to their students and maintain a log of the readings during each month of the implementation.

4. Eight sixth grade teachers will report more contacts to communicate positive comments vs. negative comments to parents during each month of the implementation period and maintain a log of the initiated contacts.

5. At least one parent of each of the 60 "at-risk" children will participate in one three-hour session on, "How I can Help Improve My Child's Academic Progress in School."

Measurement of Objectives

The following standards of performance were used to measure the objectives in this practicum:

1. Attendance registers of teacher and parent participants in the inservice sessions.
2. Monthly logs of teaching reading aloud activities and teacher initiated parent contacts of positive communications.
3. Surveys to evaluate the seven inservice sessions given to teachers and parents.
4. Oral "Teacher Finale" session - Share-a-thon activities.

The writer selected the instruments because they revealed the specific data needed for analyzing the results. Each instrument was unique and provided the following information:

1. The instrument provided how many sessions each teacher and parent attended.
2. The instrument allowed each teacher to describe the new strategies that they had tried with success to other colleagues in a non-threatening atmosphere.
3. The instrument provided the number of times teachers read aloud to their students on a monthly basis.
4. The instrument provided the number of times monthly that teachers communicated positive vs. negative comments to parents.
5. The instrument provided the number of times monthly that teachers initiated regular parent contacts.
6. The instrument measured the overall effectiveness of the sessions to empower classroom teachers in support of literacy development, strengthen the

communication bond between teachers and parents, and to increase parent involvement.

Finally, in order to provide the implementation phase of the practicum with success, the writer obtained permission from the director of staff development to use funds allocated by the "Mentorship Program." This program provides the teachers with trusted well-trained colleagues who can assist them with skills that they need now and not at some distant time in the future. The mentors are trained in staff development programs that require collaborative planning and management. The program is continually monitored and adjustments are made in response to the changing needs. Each mentor assigned to a teacher for a fiscal school year, receives a substantial supplement in salary.

CHAPTER IV

Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The concern about "at-risk" students not being adequately or appropriately supported in their literacy development has aroused much research. The following literature presents recent solutions to improve this problem.

Perelman (1988) indicated that technology is the key to successful cost-effective learning and that successful programs benefit from staff development where participants are actively engaged in the process.

The results were extraordinary in that they produced an increase change in the students' attitudes toward reading. The computers and word processors captured the students' interest, which led to a positive interaction between teachers and students. The teachers were very at ease with the program and found that reading reminded the students to communicate and to understand what others have communicated through print.

D'Ignazia (1988) have confirmed that teacher workshops incorporate collaborative learning, pride of authorship, self-directed learning, and scavenging for multi-media. They will lead to a better communication between teachers and students.

The results of this study indicated that teachers were eager to implement what was learned in the workshop sessions in their classrooms. The students received the strategies from the teachers which eventually made a major impact on the entire school.

Charp (1988) firmly believed that in order for systems to meet the needs of their students individually, financial assistance from the federal government is essential.

The results of this study indicated strong desires of the system to solve the needs of students and demands of parents. She indicated that the schools of today need to change and hoped that the educational system of the future would be different from today.

However, in order to meet the restructuring demands, the financial assistance may require the support of the public.

Jennings (1988) reported that funds were available by the federal government for motivating teachers to use technology and to increase parental involvement in the school and Henderson (1988) confirmed that parent involvement does improve student achievement.

Both studies revealed excellent results. They both agreed that parents are a school's best friends and that every opportunity should be presented to allow teachers and parents to communicate. They advocate parent home teaching to foster the "at-risk" children a higher performance in school.

Bristow (1985) suggested helping poor readers by placing them in instructional levels. The results yielded that these students became more confident in their reading and were more eager to take on other activities in the classroom.

Raphael (1982) demonstrated the use of self-questioning as a means of improving comprehension. The results proved that poor readers are more active when they can participate orally. Therefore, by developing their own self-questions about the reading selections, the students presented use of these strategies in groups, plays, and interviews. Also, their comprehension increased 80 percent.

Bates and Navin (1986) demonstrated the use of parent sessions to improve remedial readers' achievement. The results proved that children benefit greatly from reading programs that involve parents; but for economically deprived children, parental involvement is imperative if reading success is to be achieved.

Topping (1987) suggested paired reading as a means of improving comprehension skills of remedial readers. The results in a sample of 1,200 children involved to date, average gains of 3.5 in accuracy and 5 times normal in comprehension.

The improvements were even more significant because the children involved were considered to be seriously failing with reading. Also, as with other projects involving parents, great enthusiasm was generated among both the parents and children who took part.

Richek and McTague (1988) supports the use of popular children's books to improve the students' disabilities in reading. The results indicated that the students became fascinated with the reading material due to the text and vocabulary. The books also gave the students a sense of confidence which led to fluent reading.

Topping (1989) further revealed that tutoring and paired reading are essential ingredients for improving low reading skills. The results were highly significant in that all students benefited from the use of peer tutoring, tutoring, or just being a tutor themselves. However, paired reading revealed positive results when students were able to enjoy reading materials at a higher level which was too difficult for them to read. They were given the opportunity to select their own books which gave them a sense of reading purpose.

Shanklin and Rhodes (1989) firmly believed that sharing and extending enhances reading comprehension. This conclusion was based on the personal relationship that the reader brings to the written text. The students are engaged in a questioning and answering session, where each one is given the opportunity to express his understanding of the written material. The results proved that when students engaged openly with questions concerning text, it naturally encouraged them to have social interactions with others about the text.

Hollingsworth (1989) confirmed that preservice and inservice for educators would help them to learn to teach reading more effectively. This conclusion was based on the strategies of modeling and instructor-teacher interactions. Collaborative ideas were shared to create innovative variations beyond the model examples.

Smith (1990) advised teachers to get parents involved in the reading process by letting parents know that the school needed them as well as their children. The results further indicated that unless parents realize for themselves that they play an essential role in the educational process, all the efforts made by teachers will not be effective. The review also indicated that teachers who receive high parent participation, work very hard including them in read aloud programs, spelling and writing assignments, home-based materials, asking parents to visit the classrooms, and by using the child's written language to get parents and other children to listen and discuss text material with each other.

Rasinski and Fredericks (1990) concluded that parents, grandparents, and older siblings can be essential humanistic ways of improving reading skills. The evidence suggested that parents read to their children because this technique was highly effective in literacy development. It was also recommended, that educators spread by means of articles, newspapers, and at school related conferences and meetings.

Valencia (1990) concluded that teachers trained in assessment strategies will be able to recognize and evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses. With this strength, they can make instructional decisions, collaborate more with their students, and at the same time communicate better with parents and administrators. The results revealed that teachers can make the assessment a part of the reading the program. By doing this, the integration into classroom lifestyles and instruction becomes an influential part of the reading program. The assessment must be an ongoing process, because this will send messages to parents, students, and the teachers that learning is never completed. Finally, as educators, we constantly need some type of instrument to help us with decision-making. Assessment is indeed the instrument, if used properly!

Dowhower (1989) revealed that teachers frequently use cooperative learning strategies in reading because they involve students pairing together for activities and the strategies are easy to supervise in the regular classroom. The findings also confirmed that re-reading is a vital technique and is practical in use for high and low achievers. The evidence proved highly significant because gains were seen in low ability students in the areas of factual retention.

Wicklund (1989) acknowledged that shared poetry through whole language experiences will help remedial readers who are demonstrating reading difficulties. They become strengthened in reading, language, and writing.

Wesson, Vierthaler, and Haubrich (1989) suggested that teachers select three basal passages, and let each student read orally for one minute to determine reading ability groups for instruction. By using this technique, the teacher does not rely on previous assumptions made by other teachers. The information gathered will be adequate for present instruction and will enable the teacher to be accurate in placing the student in an instructional level for immediate instruction.

Finally, French, Danielson, Conn, Gale, Lueck, and Manely (1990) suggested that teachers use whole language experiences to teach reading by involving daily use of print, a variety of reading and writing materials, help when needed, and creativity. They advocate that all teachers should make a habit of using the whole language philosophy in their classrooms because children should be provided the opportunity of exploring and using print to their discretions. When this opportunity is given, the children become enthusiastic and encouraged through literacy development.

In comparing the solutions from the literature, to the writer's local problem, population, and work setting, the writer is convinced that the solutions presented in the proposal did work. The reasons to justify this statement are:

1. The program worked because it provided inservice on the needs of the teachers and parents at a particular school.
2. The program worked because it presented new practices and trends in reading approaches.
3. The program worked because teachers developed new insights and greater understanding of literacy development processes.
4. The program worked because it trained experienced classroom teachers to develop the competencies necessary to conduct an effective reading program for all students.
5. The program worked because effective teaching practices lead to improved performance in achievement.

6. The program worked because it provided an opportunity to improve parent awareness, communication, and involvement, which is vital to the reading process.

Description of Selected Solution

After careful consideration, the writer proposed staff development and parent involvement sessions to effectively solve the problem in the setting. The solutions selected were appropriate because research reviews revealed that they are essential for the successful implementation of any new program or for the systematic improvement of existing programs. They satisfied the goals of the Practicum because new or improved programs require changes in teacher and parent behavior and effective staff development is the best way to change such behavior. They surpassed the other possible solutions, in that teachers and parents were helped in acquiring specific knowledge and skills to assist children in their literacy development.

Several researchers have tried the solutions and found that staff development had become one of the most thoroughly researched topics in the field of education. Hollingsworth (1989) offered several suggestions for preservice and inservice educators to teach reading techniques to parents and other professionals. She confirmed that staff development enabled them to learn by example and become creatively involved in the process. Moreover, it was indeed an effective solution in solving reading problems of students.

Report of Action Taken

The writer designed and organized staff development and parent involvement sessions to support the literacy development of sixth grade poor readers in the regular classroom. The theme of the session was entitled "New Approaches and Strategies In Teaching Reading To Poor Readers In The Regular Classroom." The plan produced seven monthly professional development sessions for teachers and one session for parents. A total of 35 contact hours were received by teachers and three hours for parents.

Prior to the implementation, the writer obtained approval from the Practicum II adviser, staff development director of the district, obtained funding from the "Mentorship Program," and collaborated with sixth grade teachers, principals, and parent coordinator concerning the program's implementation.

All participants received a copy of the "Staff Development Calendar Plan," which provided dates and topics to be discussed. They also received a copy of the goals and objectives to be reached in the Practicum experience (see Appendix E). However, the meeting places, times, and speakers were announced in the form of a memo and presented leading up to the sessions. A "Log Booklet," which contained the necessary forms to be used during the implementation, was given to each teacher to facilitate a monitoring system for the writer (see Appendix F).

The first staff development session was designed to involve teachers in the discipline process. In this session, the speaker, an "In-School Suspension" director, referred to discipline as a set of standards by which children and adults adhered to, in order to reach success. The teachers were given effective techniques that would enable them to be lead-managers, instead of boss-managers, within the classroom. They were told that lead-managers strived toward finding the solutions to persistent problems in the classroom, rather than create the problems, and that they should lead the way in maintaining standards because standards contribute to the success of the students, while insuring their safety.

In order to do this, teachers were advised that children should be given frequent opportunities to take care of the school's property, share in cooperative learning, become responsible for their actions, and respect others. Also, teachers and parents cannot learn for children. They must take a self-motivated role in wanting to learn. Therefore, opportunities should be given, as much as possible, to involve the students in developing the rules of the classroom. Special consideration should be given to involve the students' needs, interest, different personalities, rules of the school, and others who are involved in the educational process. Secondly, they were asked to talk with their colleagues concerning their beliefs regarding discipline, and that every possible opportunity should be given for collaborative sharing and modeling of the standards. Third, the teachers had the chance to discuss the potential causes of discipline problems in the educational process. Several of them were somewhat surprised to hear that teachers and unexpected happenings related to a large portion of the school's discipline problems. In actuality, they felt that "the students" were the major causes of the discipline problems, not realizing that teachers themselves contribute to the problem because of their bad days and that the schools have no control over unexpected happenings.

With this in mind, each teacher was given a packet which contained "Classroom Management Strategies," to be used in educational settings. They were directed to follow such tips as: don't expect your classrooms to be free from discipline problems, correct the behavior immediately in a private manner, avoid contacting parents if possible, and analyze the causes of the problem carefully before applying the solutions. By using these tips on a daily basis, teachers will be able to see significant changes in the attitudes and behaviors of their "at-risk" students and at the same time become lead-managers in contrast to being just disciplinarians.

The second staff development session was designed to encourage teachers to use a variety of modern approaches to reading instruction in order to get the "at-risk" student more involved in the instructional process and to facilitate an awareness in parents about how they too could help their child in the process. The teachers had the opportunity to commute some 30 miles to attend the session at the writer's home. The occasion created a mood of attending a conference. The writer prepared dinner for the guest speaker, eight sixth grade teachers, and other guests. The manner of the evening was exciting, and you could tell that the teachers were enjoying themselves and eager to get down to business. Several comments were made throughout the evening in reference to having the sessions away from the school in settings of this nature. When asked why? Their answers were prompt in agreement, "They are too boring!" As a result of the comments, the teachers volunteered their homes for future sessions, and the director of staff development designed the district's sessions to be somewhat similar for the 1990-1991 fiscal year. Instead of meeting in the homes, each guest school would house a session and furnish the dinner by bringing covered dishes. As of the final report, the teachers were more excited about attending the sessions because, not only did they acquire new knowledge, they had the opportunity to fellowship with each other.

The speaker, a professional development consultant and teacher, presented each teacher a packet containing the agenda, definitions of terms used, and current literature articles pertaining to the topics that were to be discussed. Many strategies were given of cooperative learning, whole language, paired reading, questioning techniques, learning styles, and tutoring. Afterwards, the teachers separated into groups in order to practice the techniques demonstrated by the speaker. They engaged in collaborative planning, and shared short lesson planning, in order to incorporate the strategies. When everyone had finished they returned to discuss the outcomes. Several teachers had difficulty understanding the "whole language" approach. Therefore, the speaker tried again to bring about an understanding of the terminology. The teachers were told that "whole language" involved teaching phonics, but not in isolation. Students are given hints when they are presented with spelling difficulties during their writing experience. She further emphasized that in order to develop the "whole language" approach, teachers should offer students, as much as possible, a series of multiple texts, literary genres, and manipulative experiences. This offers the children an opportunity in using language and to express themselves and their ideas. Also, it fosters an awareness of language discovery and an interaction with peers.

"Cooperative learning" presented some concerns also, from the participants. The teachers were accustomed to the traditional learning style, and were somewhat opposed to the cooperative learning style. Many reasons exists because of the discipline problems of "at-risk" students. When given the opportunity to share in the team efforts, many of the students simply cannot or will not adjust. Therefore, the teachers were given basic strategies needed to successfully implement cooperative learning in their classrooms. Extra time was spent on modeling the strategies and understanding the difference of the two learning styles. They were also encouraged to use the cooperative learning style because it has been proven to be the most effective strategy to use with adolescents.

In closing, the speaker acknowledged that teachers should put away their fears concerning the use of the approaches. Instead, they should begin reading journal articles, research for new ideas, and feel good about opening the door to creativity in their classrooms and watch the children of America, learn!

During the parent session, the participants were advised of their roles in the educational process. Each parent was given a packet informing them that they were one of the most important factors of successful reading achievement of children. Their roles were spelled out explicitly. The students need parents to model good reading habits, to read to them, to accompany them to the library, to develop reading libraries at home, to assist with homework and projects, to help build their self-esteem, to use learning games, to take interest in their school activities, and to make use of modern technology.

The speaker shared many factors which affect reading achievement. First, she indicated that the following areas may impact positively or negatively on reading achievement: self-concept; social, physical, intellectual, and emotional development/maturity; adolescence, mobility, communication/ the home situation; and, two extremely important factors:

the teacher and the school program. Secondly, the parents' awareness of an ability to deal with the developmental issues and the development of independence in the middle grade child determines, not only whether the child achieves to his highest potential, but also whether the child develops into an independent adult, capable of functioning in the real world. The speaker also shared with parents why "Self-Esteem" is the key to their children's success in school. She acknowledged that self-esteem is the positive feeling children and young adolescents have about themselves and their abilities. It is the foundation on which children build the rest of their lives. Moreover, people with high self-esteem make appropriate decisions, willingly take responsibility, feel proud of their accomplishments, cope with frustration, and meet new challenges.

The parents were urged to put their children on the path of developing high self-esteem by: remembering the power of praise, keeping a sense of humor, listening with respect and courtesy, and establishing positives "able" expectations, and persisting in them. After the presentation, the parents were able to model different parent/child conflicts and use the strategies and tips given in the session (see Appendix H).

In concluding, parents were advised to respond positively with suggestions and encouragement, and that a kind firm manner can help the reluctant or uncertain child find his or her own way through a task and achieve a sense of accomplishment.

After providing the kind of advice stated above, the parents were further challenged to communicate with the teachers more frequently by participating in school related activities, phone calls, and conferences.

The third staff development session described to teachers a series of integrated curriculum units developed from the use of the library in reading instruction. The speaker, a media specialist, discussed in its entirety the use of interest inventions, children's literature, trade books, magazines, newspapers, and book reports in the instruction of reading. The teachers were issued packets which contained an agenda, attitude/interest survey, and journal articles about the topics to be discussed. Teachers were given the opportunity to explore the world from the eyes of literature and audio-visual aids.

The speaker communicated to teachers that they have a challenge facing them daily to select and evaluate books that will keep students interested, to improve their reading ability, and to instill in them a love of learning. Therefore, the purpose of the session was designed to help them do just that.

The teachers viewed films which gave them an awareness of selecting books for classroom enjoyment and instruction, tips on evaluating, organizing, using children's literature, and ways to purchase books for the classroom without expense. The speaker further emphasized that teachers should pay close attention to the students' developmental stages of learning and their reading levels before selecting the books.

While the teachers modeled the selection of books' activity, the speaker presented the steps to help them organize and develop their classroom libraries. First, they were advised to elicit the support of parents through meetings, newsletters, and solicit the donations of books. Second, let parents know why reading is so important in their children's daily lives through conferences and newsletters. Third, ask the director of community relations of the district to assist in asking the community to donate books. Fourth, make visits to the community library and make book selections on a monthly basis. Finally, exchange books with other colleagues or assist the librarian with a school-wide read-a-thon or book fair.

The teachers practice using various techniques to assist them in evaluating children's literature such as, readability formulas, the use of parents, students, and the community. They also focused on the need to recognize the learning styles of individual students. The speaker made note that not all children like to read. Therefore, effective teachers will utilize the library's audio-visual component, allowing their students to use filmstrips, videos, tape lessons, and read-aloud books. For current events, they were again made aware of newspapers, magazines, journals, radio, and television to assist them in reporting current information to the class.

In addition, teachers were asked to use short plays and dress-up book reports in contrasts to written reports.

They were told that students love to act out fantasies and could rewrite their versions of books through drawings and short stories. These two strategies have been proven to improve reading skills of poor readers in middle grades through the cooperative learning approach.

Before closing, the speaker shared with teachers some of the latest research on reading aloud to students. They were presented with findings that reported significant improvements in motivating students to read, and at the same time, the teachers motivated themselves. By taking advantage of using an alternative approach of reading instruction, the teachers began to share the world of literature a different way. Teachers were given the opportunity to model reading aloud strategies to the group. Each teacher selected a book in order to teach a skill to the group. This allowed the teachers to perform as students and interpret the skill that was being taught. This activity became the highlight of the evening and the teachers were completely involved. Nevertheless, the following reasons were given to the teachers concerning why reading aloud should be used in the classroom: First, students are brought together as a whole to learn a specific skill through a different text. Second, units are made clearer to the student by using various text to bring about an understanding. Third, students learn to use the English language better. Finally, it allows the student to be in contact with an array of children's literature.

The writer was really impressed with this session. The speaker really played a significant role in making sure that the teachers were familiar with the library's function and the techniques of the read-aloud approach to be used in the classroom. The teachers, before this session, were already engaged in reading aloud to their students and keeping a log of the number of times they read to them. But the writer is confident that this session made an impact on the results to be presented in Chapter 5.

As the speaker concluded, the teachers were presented an array of "Read" strategies to add to their packets. The strategies presented were in language arts, composition, literature, oral and dramatic activities, grammar and language arts, and literary scavenger hunts.

The fourth staff development session provided many helpful resources to the teachers in an effort to improve the reading skills of "at-risk" students. The speaker, a computer specialist, introduced the title "The Technology Connection," with much intensity.

Teachers were informed that, we as a people, have seen more technological changes than any person who has ever lived on the earth and that the changes in technology have also added many avenues to the field of education. They were also informed that the use of audio-visual equipment enhances the child's motivational level and often provides instant feedback and remediation. Furthermore, computers provide one-on-one instruction that is self-paced, and students can be easily taught the skill.

After the introduction, the teachers received their packets of "The Technology Connection," which contained information on the identification of "at-risk" students, technology basics, incorporating technology into regular classrooms,how to make reading lesson plans to reinforce skills of the "at-risk" student through computer managed instruction, and where to go for help concerning computer instruction.

With this knowledge, the teachers will be able to utilize the modern equipment that had been developed to support literacy development in their classrooms. The teachers can now find the task of individualizing their lessons to meet the needs of students easier and more stimulating. Moreover, they will be able to revise programs to provide the area of need for each individual student and at the same time offer collaborative interaction with other students.

During this session, the teachers operated the computers because many had prior knowledge of their functions. Nevertheless, they practiced examining hardware and software equipment, which gave them the insight as to how they could modify them to provide access to all students and their handicaps. Teachers were advised that handicapped students will benefit from the use of the computer and that technology allows them to complete tasks that may at one time seem impossible.

Enrichment and remedial activities in reading, were key issues presented to the speaker. However, the teachers were told that these activities need not be complicated. Teachers can make the activities fun for the children by using the computer. Thus, the motivational level increases and learning follows.

In concluding, the speaker informed the group that as technology moves forward into the 90's, many educational frontiers will be explored. Therefore, as teachers of literacy and writing, we should not use the computer totally for instruction and forget about other approaches. Students in middle grades still need time for small group interactions, oral discussion, and conferencing. With this in mind, America's children will no longer be behind. They will be the most educated people that have ever lived in the times of mankind.

The fifth staff development session was designed to help teachers provide for individual differences among their students in the regular classroom. The speakers, a school counselor, a school psychologist, and a Chapter I teacher, supplied the teachers information about the responsibilities of the support personnel that is available in most conventional schools and communities. They were also provided the services that their particular school offered. The title of the session was "When to use Your Colleagues and Other Professionals In the Educational Process."

Each teacher was given a packet which contained an agenda, definitions, support personnel and their responsibilities, common disorders of children which affects learning, and literature references. The speakers informed the teachers that there are many different reasons why a child may become educationally "at-risk" or may function at a lower level of performance than his peer group. They further acknowledged that teachers fail to realize that we have a number of different specialists to deal with each unique problem area. What should be done when a teacher recognizes a problem? Whom should they contact? What services can be provided to help this child improve? The teachers were directed to contact first, the principal, because they are responsible for everything going on in the school and should take a responsible role in the reading and other content related programs. Principals should be keeping abreast of what is going on in their schools. When reading programs are not available in their school, they should meet with the superintendent to discuss other interventions and lead the way to secure funding to provide the programs. Secondly, the teachers were informed that when a school does not provide reading supervisors or reading support teachers to help assist them in the regular classroom, they should use collaborative efforts among themselves in sharing ideas, strategies, and other means of support. If sister schools are in close proximity, teachers should call on the support teachers for immediate assistance in problem solutions. Furthermore, they were advised to make use of the school's librarian or media specialist, because the role of this support person is more valuable than just "book recycling." The media specialist is considered an important entity of the reading program because they have acquired the knowledge of material availability and content, and the reading levels of the materials. Third, teachers should use their guidance counselors to identify problems, that students may be experiencing with reading. Counselors deal with the emotional or feeling side of issues. Children act out their feelings and emotions about themselves and what is going on and how they perceive what goes on. Teachers were told to question whether a child is coming from an economically, emotionally, or socially depressed home life, what characteristics would this child have and what affect would this have on learning. The speakers shared many answers, such as the child would be withdrawn, inattentive, passive with peers, and that all of these would affect his/her ability to bring to focus mental abilities in school. The way a child perceives what happens to him in school and at home affects his ability to learn. Moreover, food, shelter, clothing, and safety come before learning and self-actualization on that list. If a child, or part of his family, is being neglected or abused, then he is not going to be as emotionally or mentally available for learning. Counselors play a significant role in this area.

They can provide suggestions for the classroom teacher and work with the students during counseling sessions. They can further assist by making the teachers aware of the students' needs and interest with whom they have worked. Sometimes the teachers will see problems evidenced as inappropriate coping skills or behavior problems in the classroom, which interfere with learning. Teachers may pick out the child who has no friends and has problems getting along, or the class clown, the bully, the child who cries easily, the wall flower that almost seems not to exist, the extremely good child who is overcompensating, the child with age inappropriate sexual knowledge or street knowledge, and last but not least, the hyperactive, inattentive, and impulsive child. Here again, where does the teacher turn to for help? The guidance counselors! They can foster recommendations which will provide specific guidance for handling the individual students' needs or discipline problems, which may be extremely valuable in teaching reading. Finally, teachers should use the guidance counselors when selecting books for their students to read. Students may have an interest in their future careers and counselors can help in selecting reading materials geared toward the students' interests and needs. They can gather this information by surveying the child's needs, wants, wishes, likes, and dislikes. By gathering this information, goals are made and the teachers will be able to work on the areas to bring about success in the classroom.

Fourth, the school psychologist can provide services for the classroom teacher per their request. They are available for teacher services almost in every system, but there are not enough of them to meet the growing demands of all the children who need their services. Teachers were told to be very selective when referring students to the school psychologist because they handle a tremendous amount of cases during the school year. Teachers were advised to try as many strategies to bring sbout a change by referring them to the "Student Support Team." This (SST) team is formed by teachers, parents, and other related specialists to find solutions for problems students are having that interfere with learning. The SST may be formed for other areas, such as hearing and speech. Here again, the teachers will get the opportunity to receive other services before making the final decision to use the psychologists. The speech/hearing specialist can determine what particular sounds children are having a difficult time hearing or producing. This information can lead toward a reading program for the individual student and more or less correct his/her disabilities without further screening. The speech/hearing specialist may also provide professional development to teachers who are in need of articulation training, language development, and activities related to language development. After applying the interventions mentioned, and the child has not improved, the psychologist should be contacted because not all problems are academic. The psychologist can provide services by assessing to find out the students' strengths and weaknesses in intellectual ability, by determining the learning styles and perceptual needs of students, by providing counseling sessions, by helping teachers through inservice, and by testing children for various exceptionalities, such as learning disabilities, mental retardation, and behavioral disorders.

Fifth, the teachers were advised to acquire services from parents, community, and other interested parties. As mentioned earlier, if parents cannot or will not provide assistance for physical and emotional well-being of their child, community agencies are on stand-by to assist them. They were told to contact the local system's director of community relations to help them secure the services. They were also advised to contact local colleges and universities for assistance, since they offer inservice for teachers to become more effective in teaching reading in their classrooms.

Finally, a special segment was present during this session entitled, "Attention Deficit Hyperactivity." This segment was offered due to the overwhelming population of students in the school with the disorder. Teachers were told why children who have "attention deficit," of hyperactivity disorder H.A.D.D., were not serviced in their state. This was a frustrating problem for all concerned, because of the difficulties it causes with school work. With this in mind, the teachers were advised that 50% of the children with H.A.D.D. would have learning disabilities and 80% of them would have conduct problems. They were given major symptoms to look for, such as the inabilities to concentrate on or complete tasks, to wait for their turns, and to remain in their seats. Common tendencies to be aware of are acting impulsively and interrupting conversations, blurting out answers, being very talkative, enjoying dangerous activities, and shifting from one activity to another. After the symptoms were discussed, the teachers were given treatment information and how they could modify the educational program to accommodate the H.A.D.D. student's needs. Medication was considered extremely important in management of the disease, and parenting skills should be taught to the parents to help them at home. Also, parent support groups are in areas where the percentage of these students are in high numbers. Last, but not least, behavior modification should be practiced, both at home and at school, to be successful. Each teacher was given a copy of a "School Based Guidance Plan," to be offered in middle schools within the state and "Home Management Suggestions For Attention Deficit Disorder." Both will assist teachers in the classroom, and also provide parents with an awareness at home. Finally, the teachers shared open discussions, modeling, and other interactions to accomplish the goals set out for the session.

The sixth staff development session was designed to foster a better communication system with parents in the educational process. The title was "How To Communicate With Parents in the Educational Process." The speaker, a community relation's director, shared with the teachers a plan to improve the communication with parents at school. The teachers were instructed to use conferences, progress reports, report cards, community meetings, newsletters, telephone calls, calendars, and other means of communication. The teachers were given packets which contained an agenda of topics to be discussed, tips that teachers should use in their communications with parents, current literature articles, and samples of a variety of communication measures.

Teachers were informed that they should lead the way to an open communication system with parents. They should never wait for parents to contact them concerning their child's progress. Moreover, teachers should design a conference calendar to meet with each parent at least three times during the school year. During this time the teachers should respond in a friendly manner, avoid threats, select an informal talking format, be specific in skill needs, speak in native language and avoid educational jargon, speak positive concerning the child, be honest in the evaluation, avoid saying that the child will improve, use clarifications when needed, and provide suggestions for improvement on a modified basis. During the discussion session, teachers were concerned about those parents who refuse to attend a parent-teacher conference. The speaker acknowledged that the changing structure has complicated the school's effort of communicating with parents. Many children live in a one or two parent home, where employment limits the parents in their involvement of school activities. Thus, it has become very difficult to call parents at home and get them to come to the school during the day for conferences. As a result, teachers should design a form letter (see Appendix G) that will give the child's present performance and some strategies that the parents could use at home to help their children. After the letter is mailed, the teachers should always follow-up with a telephone call. Follow-up telephone calls display to parents that teachers are indeed concerned about the well-being of their children. If and when the teachers have no success with the above suggestions, the speaker highly recommended home visitations by the visiting teacher or the teacher. Some type of communication is indeed necessary, especially when "at-risk" students are involved. Teachers should try, as much as possible, to meet with parents in person, because this line of communication is most effective. However, if opportunities do not present themselves, other lines of communication should be tried.

Some other means of communicating with parents were discussed and modeled. The use of a community meeting, instead of the regular parent-teacher meetings were role played by the teachers. Each had the opportunity to act either as an administrator, teacher, or parent. Several issues were shared concerning progress reports, report cards, newsletters, and tips for parents in a non-threatening and supportive manner. The speaker acted as a liaison for the groups and produced a close communication system for the adult development interaction.

Finally, the teachers were advised to always use their principals, visiting teachers, and guidance counselors to help them communicate with parents, because when teachers and other professionals support and assist each other, they create successes not only for themselves, but also for the students in their schools.

The seventh month shifted the role from speakers to teachers in the form of a share-a-thon. The teachers had a unique responsibility of sharing at least two new strategies that they had tried with success in their classrooms. They also had to report results of monthly reading aloud to their students and the number of times they had reported positive comments to parents. Each teacher reported a variety of strategies used from "Flip Book Reports," "Book Report Posters," "Cooperative Learning Reading Activities," "Book Report Mobiles," "Book Report Windsocks," "Whole Language Activities" (writing and reading rehearsals), "Performing Commercials," "Wheels of Fortune," "Book Sharing," and many more. All of the strategies presented were exceptional in design, and will lead to helping middle graders develop a keen interest in reading.

Several positive comments made to parents were also shared such as, your child is off to a good start, is confident, is eager to please, sets high standards, is self-motivated, is cooperative, takes pride in work, and has many friends (see Results in Chapter 5).

During the implementation phase, the writer experienced two unexpected events. The calendar of events to be implemented, as designated in the proposal, had to be altered. The alteration was due to prior speaking commitments of the guest speakers. The writer dealt with the unexpected events by contacting the guest speakers "via mail," and explained the conflicts. The speakers were advised to select dates that would be more convenient for them. Also, the parents of the "at-risk" students acknowledged that one inservice session for three hours would be more convenient for them rather than three one-hour sessions. After receiving the information, the writer revised the calendar plan and issued them to teachers and parents. Due to the change of the parents' session, the writer also had to make a revision of objective six and, at the same time, the writer combined objectives four and five.

The eighth month concluded the implementation of the Practicum II experience. The writer provided continuous supervision and leadership throughout the implementation. During the eighth month, the writer analyzed the data, compared the results, and wrote the practicum report. Tables were used to report the statistical components along with an analyzation of the results.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Objective one stated that eight sixth grade teachers would voluntarily participate in seven five-hour inservice sessions on "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading in the Regular Classroom." When teachers were given the opportunity to attend the sessions, they overwhelmingly attended with 97% participation. After attending the seven sessions, six teachers had a 100% attendance participation and two teachers had an 86% attendance participation (see Table 5).

TABLE 5

TEACHER ATTENDANCE RESULTS

No. of Teachers	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Monthly Totals	Percentage of Attendance
A	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
B	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
C	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	6	86%
D	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	6	86%
E	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
F	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
G	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
H	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	7	100%
Grand Totals 8	8	8	8	8	7	7	8	54	97%
Overall Percentage of Attendance									97%

The reduction in attendance during the fifth and sixth month sessions of the implementation was because two of the sixth grade teachers had to be hospitalized due to illness. However, the overall attendance percentage proved significantly that teachers are interested in the educational needs of their students, and whenever possible they would willingly participate in activities such as these to help improve their effectiveness in the classroom.

Objective two stated that when eight sixth grade teachers are given inservice sessions on, "New Approaches and Strategies in Teaching Reading to Poor Readers in the Regular Classroom," they would be able to describe at least two new strategies that they had tried, with success, in their classroom. When the teachers were given the opportunity, they expressively described their two strategies during the share-a-thon session, with 100% participation. Listed below are the strategies presented by the teachers:

Teacher A - Two Supplemental Strategies to be used in Reading Classes

1. Students wrote, read, rehearsed and performed original commercials that were video taped and played back. The teacher gave each group of students a particular type of product to be advertised.
2. After having completed a unit on the skill of following directions, the students followed a set of written directions and produced paper airplanes. A volunteer student capable of making a more complicated one gave oral directions to the students while they made their own. Upon completion, the students went outside briefly to try them out.

Teacher B - Two Strategies to be Applied in Reading and Content Related Subjects

1. Students engaged themselves in "Cooperative Learning" activities to achieve success in group projects, written/oral reports, classroom drill/practice, and social interactions. This strategy was used in reading and social studies.

2. Students were selected to be "Peer Tutors" in the reading and social studies classes. They met after school two times a week with the teacher for one-hour to tutor students who were having difficulties in the above areas.

Teacher "B" firmly believed that "Cooperative Learning" and "Peer Tutoring" relieves the teacher from direct learning instruction and that students retain more material when they have an active part in their own education. This was proven to be true after incorporating the two strategies in the classroom.

Teacher C - Two Strategies Used to Teach Content Area (Social Studies) and Reading "Technology and Classroom Management Strategies"

1. The Apple Computer was used to assist students who were having trouble comprehending map skills, graphs, and tables. The Scholastic software was used to re-teach these skills and the students improved tremendously.

2. The discipline strategies used with the Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanovich reading series, Level 12 group, was a smashing success. It helped calm down the group, placed them in a regimented system, and somehow placed the value of reading where it should be, for enjoyment and information. Reward certificates for improved academic performance and improved behavior were given. This worked very well in motivating students to do their best.

Teacher D - Two Strategies to Incorporate Literacy Development in the Content Areas of Social Studies and Science

Cooperative Learning and Whole Language

1. Social Studies - The students were given the opportunity to explore the methods of historical and social scientific inquiry. They role played what questions do historians ask? What sources of information do they use?, and how historians write up their findings. Each group consisting of five students were given a state of their choice. They made up questions, researched for their answers, and wrote mini-booklets about the state. The activity was a success. The students learned more about the states selected and used a variety of modalities to accomplish the task.

Cooperative Learning

2. Science - The students were divided into groups of four to six. They had to identify a special skill, such as sharing ideas. Then each group did a comparison of "direct current" and "alternating current." The group had to determine when and how each was developed, their advantages and disadvantages, uses of each, and why most electrical power plants provide alternate current. After this was done, each group used the information to participate in a detailed discussion on the topics listed above. The teacher's role consisted of helping the students to identify the inconsistencies in their information and to encourage them to resolve these inconsistencies. This activity was a success because the children had the opportunity to get actively involved in the demonstration, research, and discussion.

Teacher E - Two Strategies to Support Literacy Development in the Classroom

Technology and Media

1. Students engaged themselves in the world of "Technology." Through collaborative efforts shared by the subject and the computer teacher, students during their reading class engaged themselves in remediation of comprehension skills using the computer. Students who had difficulty locating main ideas, factual information, cause/effect relationships, and sequencing experienced an innovative approach of learning.

2. Students joined a book club where they were challenged to read at least two books in a two-week period. The librarian also played an active role by initialing a release to return the book after a few simple questions were asked. If the goal of two books were read, the students in exchange were given discount coupons to a local book store for the purchase of a personal book.

Teacher F - Two Strategies Used to Support Literacy Development in the Classroom

Whole Language and Media

1. One reading strategy that Teacher "F" learned more about during the seminar on the "Whole Language" approach to reading was to have the students work orally in small groups for some particular purpose. Teacher "F" used this technique a number of times in both reading and science classes with mixed results. Teacher "F" had the students work in groups of two's and three's to read orally and answer questions on the [illegible] [illegible], and then to discuss and perform [illegible] and comprehension exercises. Teacher "F" found that a group of two students had worked out best for these particular activities, because they can work aloud more quietly. The level of noise in our smaller, more crowded classroom when a number of groups of three's are working orally, gets unmanageable and the students cannot concentrate. This is probably partly because the students feel they have to make their voices louder in order for them to carry to that third person and they cannot sit as close together. However, in groups of two's the students do very well and learn from each other quite well.

2. Another device that Teacher "F" used a lot this year in the reading class was to require at least two book reports each six-weeks. One of these book reports had to be on a Newberry Award or other recommended books while the second report could be on a book of choice. Teacher "F" believed strongly that students need to not only read but to read some examples of good literature. The book reports have taken a number of interesting formats. Two that were enjoyed the most were the flip book and the book report [illegible]. In the flip book the students cut 2 - 8½ x 11 sheets of drawing paper into [illegible] and the directions for this are as follows: "Draw pictures to illustrate your book according to the following [illegible]. Brief explanations can be added but this is basically an illustrated report). Page 1 = Title, Author; Page 2 = The Setting; Page 3 = The Main Character; Page 4 = A Problem to Solve; Page 5 = A Funny Event; Page 6 = An

exciting event; Page 7 - Solving the problem; and Page 8 - The end" (see Appendix H). The book report poster is merely a sheet of 12" x 18" drawing paper that the student receives and upon which they draw and briefly explain four to six (or more) things from the book. It can be people, events, scenes, houses, animals, etc., whatever stands out in their minds. It also must be colored and the title must be apparent.

Teacher G - Two Strategies Used to Support Literacy Development in the Reading Program

Communication and Whole Language

1. Since communication between home and school is vital to a child's success in the classroom, teacher "G" designed a "Calendar of Skills" to be issued on a monthly basis to parents. The calendar of skills contained daily activities that parents could use at home with their children. By using the calendar of skills, parents are involved in the educational process of their children. They can see specific information gathered, such as the success rate of areas that need remediation by the teacher. This information is reported bi-weekly to the classroom teacher for follow-up activities (see Appendix I). The calendar of skills proved to be a success because the parents responded favorably by using them at home and by also reporting the results.

2. Teacher "G" used whole language activities to communicate with parents. Each student had to design and write his/her own "Class Newsletter" to parents. The parents were told about projects, field trips, ways that they could help, and their progress in subject related activities. Teacher "G" further focused on why parents ought to be informed with the children, in order to get them to encourage their parents to become involved in their overall learning experience. The success rate was tremendous. By involving the students in the newsletter writing, they were more eager to carry the communications home, share them with parents, and initiate the communication process between home and school.

Teacher H - Two Strategies to Support Literacy Development

1. Activity: Book Report Mobiles

Materials: String, fishing wire
Coat hanger
White tagboard
Markers
Scissors
Hole puncher

Directions: Using a coat hanger as a center fixture, cut out several pieces of cardboard (about 8) in different shapes about 3" by 5." These pieces will be strung from the coat hanger using string or fishing wire. Build the mobile by placing the setting of the book on the top level, the characters on the middle level, and the story plot on the bottom levels. Pieces should be decorated on both sides so that as the mobile turns it will be viewed from all directions.

2. Activity: Book Report Windsocks

Materials: Scissors
Yarn
Crayons or markers
Stapler

Directions: Each student is given a piece of construction paper. He then draws a line 7 inches from the top edge. In this top section, he illustrates a scene from his book and he lists the title and author. Next, he measures eight to ten strips up to the drawn line. On each strip, he writes information about the book's characters, plot, setting, sad parts, etc. He then cuts the strips, rolls the ends together at the top and staples each section. Holes are punched through the top to form a triangle shape when yarn is threaded through. Hang in classroom.

Teacher "H" contributes the success of the activities to creativity. The students were given the opportunity to explore their creative abilities as well as follow directions, recall details, depict characters, describe plots and settings, and much more. By doing so, the students recall of the written text was far greater than it would have been if only questions were asked about the story.

Objective three stated that eight sixth grade teachers would report monthly regarding reading aloud to their students. By examining the monthly logs sent to the writer during the eight months, the writer noticed that the teachers had read aloud overall totally to their students 1,020 times (see Table 6). This was an increase of 659 times in comparison to the 1989-90 figures, presented by the teachers before the implementation.

Teacher "A" read aloud to students 123 times in comparison to estimated figure of 50 times, teacher "B" read aloud to students 37 times in comparison to estimated figure of zero, teacher "C" read aloud to students 149 times in comparison to estimated figure of 60 times, teacher "E" read aloud to students 64 times in comparison to estimated figure of 30 times, teacher "F" read aloud to students 105 times in comparison to estimated figure of 40 times, teacher "G" read aloud to students 118 times in comparison to estimated figure of 50 times, and teacher "H" read aloud to students 125 times in comparison to estimated figure of 60 times.

TABLE 6

MONTHLY READING ALOUD TO STUDENTS

Results

									1990-91	1989-90
# of Teachers	# of Years Teach Experience	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Totals	Estimated Totals
A	14	0	22	20	20	20	21	20	123	50
B	8 Months	4	6	4	6	4	5	8	37	0
C	17	15	18	24	23	20	23	26	149	60
D	18	36	55	76	45	27	58	2	299	80
E	2	3	10	9	12	7	13	10	64	30
F	4	7	18	20	16	14	20	10	105	40
G	5	10	20	18	20	10	20	20	118	50
H	15	0	17	30	20	23	14	21	125	60
									Shows an Increase of 649 Times	
										371
								Grand Total of Monthly Reading to Students	1020	

Although teacher "B" was a beginning teacher with zero teaching experience in 1989-1990, the increase was an improvement and was accepted by the writer. When comparing the teaching experience of the eight sixth grade teachers to the number of times they read aloud to their students, the increase was highly significant. Teacher "D," with 18 years of experience, had read the most, 299 times, in comparison to the teacher with only eight months of teaching experience, who had read only 37 times.

The writer would like to contribute the overall increase in the reading aloud activities to the teaching experience and the techniques presented in the library session. Teacher "D" had more classroom training in instruction, had acquired more ideas, was able to recognize that children need different types of activities regardless of state and county mandates, knew that students respond to different kinds of reinforcements, and that children do not develop a skill at the automatic response level the first time the teacher introduces the skill.

Therefore, when the reading aloud strategy was used, the same flexibility occurred. Teacher "D" was allowed to present activities in a different prospective, and at the same time accomplish the goals set out by the mandatory reading program. Generally, beginning teachers are not analyzers. They have not yet acquired the analytical strategies that only come with years of experience. They tend to follow the instructional approach of using the teacher's manuals as a "recipe" for all areas of instruction. Not realizing that children learn in different ways, rates, and have different styles, as they had learn in college, they simply fall into the category of following the mandates of the state and school district. Often, too, they are a part of a new teachers' evaluation program, whereby, they are required to perform for evaluations several times within that school year, make long range portfolios, and take the state exams. When does a beginning teacher read aloud to students? Will time be made available to do so? What about other creative ideas?

Teacher "B" fell into this category and had very little time to be productive with the students. Very little time was allowed to deviate from the mandated standards. But, time was made to the best of this teacher's ability to participate in the activity and still meet the requirements of the state and local district. The participation by both beginning and experienced teachers is commendable, because the educational system of today has its priorities mixed up, and a restructured system is definitely needed in order to facilitate a change. When states and districts are in a competitive arena as to which state or district has the most competent teachers or the best school systems, and have taken the main goal out of focus, which should be teaching and helping students to become functional adults in society, a change is definitely needed.

Objective four stated that eight sixth grade teachers would report more contacts to communicate positive comments vs. negative comments to parents during each month of the implementation period, and would maintain a log of the initiated contacts. By examining the monthly logs submitted to the writer during the eight months, the writer noticed an increase in the positive comments made to the parents. Each teacher shared at the share-a-thon meaningful communications that were made to the parents. Although time was their greatest enemy, they managed to initiate the contacts without any prompting.

The 579 positive communications made in 1990-1991 was indeed greater than the estimated 1989-1990, 320 positive comments made prior to the implementation (see Table 7). Teacher "A" made 70 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 25 positive communication made in 1989-1990, teacher "B" made 26 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the zero figure in 1989-1990, teacher "C" made 100 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 50 positive communications made in 1989-1990, teacher "D" made 132 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 70 positive communications made in 1989-1990, teacher "E" made 40 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 20 positive communications made in 1989-1990, teacher "F" made 61 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 35 positive communications made in 1989-1990, teacher "G" made 68 positive communication in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 40 positive comments made in 1989-1990, and teacher "H" made 82 positive communications in 1990-1991 in comparison to the estimated 45 positive comments made in 1989-1990.

TABLE 7

MONTHLY CORRESPONDENCE TO PARENTS WITH POSITIVE COMMENTS

Results

# of Teachers 8	Estimated Positive Comments 1989-90	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Total # of Positive Comments 1990-91
A	25	3	18	13	10	9	12	5	70
B	0	3	5	7	2	4	3	2	26
C	50	6	15	20	16	13	20	10	100
D	70	5	30	28	15	15	33	6	132
E	20	6	10	8	3	4	5	4	40
F	35	3	15	18	20	0	0	5	61
G	40	2	12	17	10	8	11	5	68
H	45	12	15	15	13	12	5	10	82
Total of Estimated Positive Comments 1989-90	320						Total of Positive Comments 1990-91		579

According to the analysis of Objective 3, the statistical results indicated that the greater responses were in the areas where the teachers had the most teaching experience. This is also true of Objective 4. Teacher "D" in comparison to teachers "B," "C," "D," "E," "F," "G," and "H" had made more contacts to communicate positive comments to parents.

In reference to standards of performance, it would be unrealistic not to look at the causative or contributing factors as to why the other teachers had fewer contacts. First, the fewer contacts could have been a combination of variables beyond the teachers' control. Next, the lack of students' performance, behavioral problems, adjusting to new rules, or teacher/administrative difficulties could have easily presented a climate that would not produce meaningful comments to communicate. Finally, the presentation of the "How To Communicate With Parents in the Educational Process" session, was not presented until the seventh month of the implementation due to scheduling problems. However, during this session the teachers would have received an enormous amount of information that would have directed and challenged the teachers to make the positive comments to the parents with a greater effect.

Nevertheless, the writer is satisfied with the improvement results of the positive comments made to parents and is convinced that after the session was presented to the teachers they would be able to communicate to parents with greater gains during the 1991-1992 fiscal year.

Objective five stated that at least one parent of each of the 60 "at-risk" children would participate in one three-hour session on, "How I Can Help Improve My Child's Academic Progress in School."

After viewing the attendance record of the parent session, the writer realized that the projected objective had not been obtained. The results indicated that 40 out of 60 parents represented at least one "at-risk" student (see Table 8). However, 67% is considered a high percentage figure for a parent session, the score indicated a 25% reduction in attendance from the rally session prior to the implementation.

TABLE 8

PARENT ATTENDANCE

Results

# of "At-Risk" Students	# of Parents At The Rally	# of Parents At The Session	% of Attendance At The Rally	% of Attendance At The Session
60	55	40	92%	67%
			25% Reduction in Attendance	

Note: A significant reduction of attendance from the parent rally and the session of 25%

It was discovered at a parent rally that the parents had a concern about the three sessions to be held during the implementation. At that time, they voiced their opinions and voted to have only one session for three hours because of convenience, rather than three one-hour sessions. After receiving the information from the "parent coordinator" of the school, the writer revised the calendar plan, and issued them to teachers and parents. Since an opportunity was given to the parents to discuss the issue, the writer expected a much higher attendance percentage than the results indicated.

Nevertheless, the writer is contented with the results because of other variables that must be considered. First, getting parents involved in the educational process of their children has been an uphill battle for educators since the beginning of the component. Next, the setting of the practicum has to be considered because of its unique qualities. The population targeted consists of a naval community that was once significantly rural. The parents are constantly moving because of transfers and other service connected obligations. During much of the practicum, the parents were under a tremendous strain, concerning themselves with the looming problems of the "Middle East" crisis. Husbands and mothers were taken from their families to drill for the possible outburst of "war." We, as a people, can never be certain of anything, but naval families never can be sure about one day to the next. Orders came unexpected with very little notice, especially today. Now that the war has broken out, mothers are left alone with children, fathers are left alone with children, children are left alone with friends and family, and the single parent has to tend with it all, and the "people chain goes on."

As of this report, the parents are not engaged in the educational process. Many are worried about the "war" which finally became a reality. They are concerned about scud attacks, ground fighting, and terrorist attacks in the "Gulf" and also at home. The children are scared tremendously, and the educators, as well as the naval community, are making sure everything is safe for everyone. Finally, by being a humanitarian first, and an educator second, the writer feels that the parents would have participated if the following variables mentioned had not interfered. Therefore, the 40 out of 60 parents, who did attend the session, made a major impact in improving parent involvement skills.

The staff development sessions, presented during the implementation phase of the Practicum II experience, proved highly effective toward amending the existing problem of supporting literacy development of "at-risk" students in the regular classroom. Eight sixth grade teachers and 40 parents of "at-risk" children were actively engaged in the sessions. After each session, they were given surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the session in meeting their needs as teachers and parents. Now the writer will report the results respectively in the order that each session was presented (see Appendices J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q for surveys).

The results of the discipline session on, "Discipline in the Reading Program," proved highly adaptable to classroom use in the reading program. Eight sixth grade teachers thought that the session was presented in an organized fashion, that the strategies could be used in the classroom, that the session should be presented to teachers every year, and that modeling and other interactions used helped them to achieve awareness. However; the eight teachers lost their uniformity when they were asked if they were lead-managers or boss-managers. Three out of eight indicated that they were lead-managers, two out of eight indicated that they were boss-managers and three out of eight indicated that they were both. Nevertheless, during the discussion portion of the session, the teachers eloquently expressed themselves concerning the rationale of their choices. General reasons were given such as, students control their behavior much better when the teachers are kind and tough, students tend to respond as respectful little people when teachers are leaders, and some students require a boss-like figure at all times because they are not used to any other kind of control. Overall, the teachers were in agreement that the new techniques presented to them would help them reorganize their classrooms in the future and that they would try very hard to remain or become lead-managers of their classrooms (see Table 9).

TABLE 9

"DISCIPLINE IN THE READING PROGRAM"

Results

Survey Questions	# of Teachers Participated	Responses Yes	Responses No	Responses Sometimes
1. Was the session presented in a clear organized manner?	8	8	0	0
2. Will you be able to use any of the strategies presented in your classroom?		8	0	0
3. Do you feel that the session should be offered each school year for teachers		8	0	0
4. Are you a lead-manager or boss-manager?		Lead-Manager 3	Boss-Manager 2	Both lead/ Boss Managers 3
5. Did the session provide enough modeling or other interactions to achieve its goals?		8	0	0

The results of the instructional approaches session on, "New Approaches of Reading Instruction," proved highly significant in providing instruction in cooperative learning, whole language, paired reading, learning styles, tutoring, and questioning techniques. The eight sixth grade teachers agreed that the session had quality instruction, 100% agreed that the information was useful in skill application, 100% agreed that the instructor was prepared, 100% agreed that the information had relevance to the support of literacy development, 88% agreed the presentation was organized, 100% agreed that the workshop was effective, 88% agreed that the workshop was the best in comparison to others, and 100% agreed that the instructor should be recommended for future workshops in the district (see Table 10).

TABLE 10

"NEW APPROACHES OF READING INSTRUCTION"

Results

#8 Participants

Survey Questions Pt. 1	Responses Excellent	Responses Good	Responses Fair	Responses Poor	% of Responses
A. Quality of Instruction	7	1			88%
B. Usefulness of information and skills	8				100%
C. Preparation of instructor	8				100%
D. Relevance of information	8				100%
E. Organization of presentation	7	1			88%
F. Overall effectiveness of workshop	8				100%

Overall (%) Average --- 96%

Note: The highest rating of agreement was used to determine the average percentage of agreement.

Survey Questions Pt. 2	Responses The Best	Responses Among the Best	Responses Comparable	Responses Not As Good	Responses	
					Yes	No
1. How does the workshop compare with others you have had?	7	1				
2. I recommend that this instructor present workshops again in my district					8	
% of Agreement	88%				100%	

The survey also asked that the teachers name one positive aspect of the inservice. Many responded highly favorably such as, the presenter spoke with both enthusiasm and knowledge of content, the presenter had tried the strategies and found them to work in the classroom, the presenter reviewed old concepts, introduced new concepts, gave definitions, modeled the terms, and offered new perspectives for thinking and change. The teachers also stated that the information met their personal needs in the classroom and that they regret the opportunity was not presented earlier in their careers and the usability of the information was indeed practical. Overall the session was highly supported with a 96% average agreement.

The results of the parenting session on, "How Parents Can Help Their Children in the Educational Process," proved highly favorable in their acceptance. Each of the 40 parents who represented at least one "at-risk" child was able to agree 100% unifiably on the overall effectiveness of the session presented.

Forty parents agreed that the session presented was clear in organization, topics were interesting, information gathered would be effective in helping their children at home, parents would benefit from this session on a yearly basis, and that parents should model reading and other study habits. Moreover, the parents were significantly responsive and showed their interest respectively (see Table 11).

TABLE 11

"HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN
IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS"

Survey Results

Survey Questions	# of Parent Participants	Responses Yes	Responses No	% of Responses
1. Was the session presented in a clear organized fashion?	40	40	0	100%
2. Were the topics discussed interesting to you?		40	0	100%
3. Did the session provide enough information, so that you would be more effective in assisting your child at home in the educational process?				
4. Would you and other parents benefit from a session of this nature on a yearly basis?		40	0	100%
5. Do you feel that parents should model good reading and study habits for their children?		40	0	100%

The results of the media session on "Using the Library to Support Literacy in the Reading Classroom" proved to be significantly helpful in providing materials that would enrich and support the curriculum in literary appreciation, factual knowledge, aesthetic values, ethical standards, and at the same time consider the various interests, abilities, and maturity levels of students served.

Eight six grade teachers acknowledged with 100% acceptance that the material was presented in a logical, orderly, and appropriate manner, that the material presented could be useful in the classroom, that the media center was an integral component in the school, that teachers should provide libraries in their classrooms, that students do have attitudes toward reading, that the lecturer provided reading attitude surveys and instruction, and that the content presented was appropriate for the grade level (see Table 12).

TABLE 12

"USING THE LIBRARY TO SUPPORT LITERACY IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM"

Results

Survey Questions	# of Participants	Responses Yes	Responses No	Responses Sometimes	% of Responses
1. Was the material presented in a logical, orderly, and appropriate manner?	8	8	0	0	100%
2. Do you feel that the material presented to you could be useful in your classroom?		8	0	0	100%
3. Do you feel that media centers are an integral component in the schools, and did the instructor give you the impression that classrooms should also provide available reading materials to their students?		8	0	0	100%
4. Do you feel students have an attitude about reading?		8	0	0	100%
5. Did the lecturer provide a "Reading Attitude" Survey?		8	0	0	100%
6. In Conclusion, was the content appropriate for the grade level which is taught?		8	0	0	100%

The results of the technology session on "The Technology Connection" proved that computers were innovative machinery that children at any age level could enjoy for fun and benefit from individualized instruction. Eighty-eight percent of the sixth grade teachers agreed that the ideas presented could be utilized in the reading class to reinforce reading skills for "at-risk" students, 100% agreed that the session was interesting, 100% agreed the speaker spoke clearly and was enthused about the subject, 100% agreed that the speaker appeared knowledgeable in the subject area and was well prepared, 88% agreed to try to feel more comfortable about working with computers with students, 88% agreed that reading skills can improve with the help of technology, 63% agreed that they would try some of the ideas presented with students, 100% agreed that the packet of materials presented improved their awareness in the support of literacy development, 100% agreed that the session was beneficial to their goal of helping "at-risk" students in the regular classroom, and 100% agreed that the question and answer period was adequately presented by the speaker, and that the answers were presented to the best of the speaker's knowledge (see Table 13).

TABLE 13

THE TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION

Results

# of Participants - (8)

Please evaluate the session on technology's role in using computers in the regular classroom to reinforce reading skills of the "at-risk" students. Please use the rating scale of 0-5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest rating of agreement. The highest rating of agreement was used to determine the average percentage of agreement among the participants.

1. The session gave me some ideas that I could utilize in the regular classroom to reinforce the reading skills of "at-risk" students.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(%)
				1	7	88%

2. The session was interesting.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					8	100%

3. The speaker spoke clearly and was enthused about his/her subject.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					8	100%

4. The speaker appeared knowledgeable in the subject area and seemed to be well-prepared.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					8	100%

5. I feel more comfortable about working with computers with my students after this session.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					7	88%

6. I feel that reading skills can be improved with the help of technology.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
				1	7	88%

7. I will try some of the ideas presented in this session with my students.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
			1	2	5	63%

TABLE 13 (continued)

8. The packet of materials presented to me at the session improved my learning and were interesting and applicable to the support of literacy development.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(%)
						100%

9. I feel the session was beneficial to my goal of helping to reinforce reading skills of "at-risk" students in the regular classroom.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					8	100%

10. I feel that the question and answering period was adequately presented by the speaker, and that the answers were given to the best of the speaker's knowledge.

(0)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	
					8	100%

Overall Average Percentage-- 93%

However, when the writer recognized the (63%) low percentage of agreement to question number seven, the teachers were advised to report their reasons. Many reasons were given, such as the school does not have enough computers for classroom use, teachers are not allowed to check-out computers or teach their classes in the computer lab, and the computer specialist can only provide instruction for students who are enrolled in the computer exploratory classes.

Nevertheless, the eight sixth grade teachers evaluated the session with an overall agreement of 93%, and noted that the session was a good start for innovation and change.

The results of the colleague session on "When to Use Your Colleagues and Other Professionals In the Educational Process" was significantly successful in providing the job descriptions of the guidance counselor, school psychologist, speech/ hearing specialist, Chapter I and remedial teachers, special education teachers, and the concerns of a very important issue, "Attention Deficit Disorder."

The results will be reported in two parts. A table chart for part one and in narrative form for part two. Two of the questions gave responses of yes and no, and three of the questions were open-ended.

Part one results indicated that 100% of the eight sixth grade teachers agreed that the information received from the session would be beneficial in the support of literacy development in the regular classroom and 100% agreed that after attending the session they can now make the appropriate referrals to the right colleague or professional (see Table 14).

TABLE 14

"WHEN TO USE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS"

Results

# of Participants (8)

Survey Questions Pt. 1	Responses Yes	Responses No	% of Responses
1. Do you feel that the information you received from this session will be beneficial to you in supporting literacy development in the regular classroom?	8		100%
2. After attending this session do you feel that you know better who to direct problems in your classroom to?	8		100%
		Overall (%) Average Agreement ----	100%

Note: The highest rating of agreement was used to determine the average percentage of agreement.

Part two results addressed the following questions (three, four, and five):

3. List the specialists serving your school. Many were able to respond adequately, such as school guidance counselor, psychologist, school nurse, individual names, speech therapists, school social worker, hearing impaired teachers, in-school suspension teacher (ISS), audiologist, behavioral disordered teachers, librarian, and others.

4. What are the areas in which your school had alternative programs and resources available to you? Again, many responded with peer counseling, group counseling, discipline psychological

evaluations, speech evaluations, hearing evaluations, visual evaluations, teacher resource center in the library, classroom guidance, and individual guidance programs.

5. How can the counselor and the psychologist help you develop a goal directed approach to academic difficulties in your classroom?

Finally, the teachers responded in a more thoughtful manner in respect to whom they should call on when academic or social difficulties occurred in their classrooms. Many responded such as, seeking the help of the guidance counselor to observe and facilitate goals in a collaborative effort in developing the students' needs, by reporting to the speech/hearing specialist those students who are experiencing difficulties in hearing and pronouncing sounds, by using all the professionals to support parent/teacher meetings, by working on specific problems that might hinder a student's progress, and whenever possible speed up the evaluation of students referred.

The results of the communication session on "How To Communicate with Parents in the Educational Process" was highly successful. The speaker used an open-ended evaluation tool to gather the results of the session. Each question will be listed respectively in the order presented and the responses.

1. Was the session very informative, somewhat informative, or not informative? The eight sixth grade teachers thought that the information presented was informative. Many

positive responses were received such as the session was informative because the material presented was based on the needs of the teachers. The teachers can now provide "tips" to parents related to their supporting roles in literacy development, they are more effective in providing conferences, organizing parent programs, and other means of communication.

2. Did the session help you in any way to understand how to communicate better with your students' parents? The eight sixth grade teachers indicated overall that now their communicating skills were better. They now recognize that positive comments can be easily made and that communication exists when you least expect it, through teacher/parent conferences, telephone calls, group sessions, programs at school, meetings after school/community, and newsletters.

3. Did the speaker present the session in a clear organized fashion? All eight sixth grade teachers agreed that the session was presented in an organized manner. When the agenda and packet of materials were presented to the teachers for session and future use, they responded highly favorably.

4. Do you feel that other teachers would benefit from a session of this nature on a yearly basis? Again, the eight sixth grade teachers responded that this session, or a comparable session, should be presented to teachers on a yearly basis, but rather held at the beginning of the school year.

Many reasons were given, such as teachers need to know how to establish a rapport with parents, they need to know that parents should be informed about their roles in the educational process, they need to know how to keep parents informed in a positive way, they need to know that parents play a significant role in the reading program, and they need to know that parents have power.

5. How well did you enjoy the session? The eight sixth grade teachers enjoyed the session tremendously. They felt that the modeling session proved highly effective in preparing them to communicate with the parents of "at-risk" students and other students in general. Also, the tips on how to communicate positive comments to parents, that were issued at the beginning of the implementation, were significantly effective in establishing a working relationship with parents.

The results of the last session on the "Staff Development Component" proved to the writer that the component was indeed significant in the mastery of the goals and objectives of the Practicum II experience.

The eight sixth grade teachers agreed, with a 100% agreement, that the staff development component was excellent in organization and presentation, excellent in usefulness and related information that was pertinent to the situation, excellent in the quality of instruction, excellent in speaker preparation, excellent in presenting packets that were in compliance with state and district mandates and could easily be incorporated in the classrooms, excellent in the environmental change from the school to various homes for the sessions, excellent in the share-a-thon activities, and excellent overall in its effectiveness to empower a change in teachers, parents, and students (see Table 15).

TABLE 15

STAFF DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT
"NEW APPROACHES AND STRAGEGIES FOR TEACHING READING"
Results

# of Participants — 8

Survey Questions	Responses Excellent	Responses Good	Responses Fair	Responses Poor	% of Responses
1. Organization/Presentation	8				100%
2. Usefulness/Relevance of information	8				100%
3. Quality of Instruction	8				100%
4. Preparation of Speakers	8				100%
5. Individual packets for future use (strategies, definitions, journal articles, etc.)	8				100%
6. Environmental change (site of sessions) held in homes instead of school when applicable	8				100%
7. Overall effectiveness of sessions	8				100%
8. Share-a-thon	8				100%
		Total - Average Agreement —			100%

The survey also asked that the teachers list one significant strength and one significant weakness of the staff development component. The eight sixth grade teachers listed several strengths, such as the environmental change of the sessions added motivation and interest for the participants and allowed for collaboration and fellowship, the share-a-thon gave the teachers a chance to model, discuss, and describe the strategies they used in their classrooms with success, the packets were exceptionally helpful promoting an awareness, the speakers were friendly and offered a personal touch to each presentation, the monitoring system on a monthly basis gave the teachers a feeling of autonomy, and the colleagues' session shed light on all the professionals in the school and their job descriptions. This was unique because at the beginning of the session, many teachers did not know who to contact when difficulties arose in their classrooms.

Although the teachers did not report any weaknesses in the staff development component, the writer is aware that every program that exists has some strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats and will present those observed in the conclusion section.

Conclusion

The primary focus of the practicum was to implement a staff development program designed to empower classroom teachers in supporting literacy development processes for all sixth grade students, to strengthen the communication between parents and teachers, and to increase parental involvement in the educational process. Participation by the teachers and parents in well-organized, structured inservice activities that were correlated to their needs served as a secondary concern.

The writer was pleased to note that the first findings indicated that the implementation of the program produced an increase in the voluntarily participation among the sixth grade teachers. They attended the sessions overall with 97% participation to increase their awareness of modern approaches that would empower them to reach "at-risk" children more effectively in the classroom. However, the three percent participation was, as stated earlier, due to illness. Nevertheless, they continued to be actively involved in the implementation of the practicum by evaluating the packets of materials of the sessions they missed. The materials within the packets were so well-organized and understandable; therefore, the teachers had no trouble at all implementing the strategies in their classrooms. These findings reinforced the fact that a well-organized, structured staff development based on the needs of the participants, can support the literacy development of children in the sixth grade.

According to Lieberman and Miller (1990), more teachers should be given an opportunity to participate in staff development programs. They further concluded that staff development programs that allow teachers a chance to engage themselves, collaborate, and make decisions are true support systems for existing problems within the school.

Second, the findings indicated that when the sixth grade teachers participated in structured inservice activities which allowed them to describe at least two new strategies they had used in their classroom to support literacy development with success, each sixth grade teacher creatively demonstrated with success an awareness of incorporating the new approaches presented such as, whole language, cooperative learning, questioning techniques, paired reading, read aloud strategies, discipline approaches, tutoring, learning styles, media assistance, technology assistance, communicating with parent skills, and when to use other professionals (guidance counselors, psychologist, etc.), and other faculty in the educational process.

Although the writer monitored the teachers on a monthly basis, the teachers were self-motivated, highly interested, and felt a sense of autonomy throughout the implementation, which further empowered them to improve individually as the sessions went on.

Reed and Saulter (1990) recommended supporting literacy development through early identification of "at-risk" students, surveying family and community backgrounds, reevaluating existing programs, providing remedial programs that contain tutoring, counseling, parental involvement, mentors, faculty staff development, and the community to assist in funding. It was found that literacy development increased significantly when children were involved in programs that involved the disciplines mentioned above.

The third finding indicated that when the sixth grade teachers read aloud to their students 1,020 times overall during the implementation, the attitudes of the students changed toward reading. The students' comprehension skills improved and their listening skills improved tremendously. Now the students look forward to literature time, which also gets them involved in the various types of literature that normally they would not have read. Reading aloud to students also increased the number of check-outs by low readers from the library. Reading aloud to students gave the poor readers a feeling of self-confidence when they read orally to give reports, presentations, or in cooperative learning activities.

Roser, Hoffman, and Farest (1990) supported literacy development of "at-risk" children by designing a program to introduce literature into the regular classroom. The program contained a series of 10 student units, along with a teacher's edition that provided detailed plans of literature instruction. The program also provided stimulating children's literature that teachers could read aloud for two weeks, along with other activities. The teachers were encouraged to add supplementary literature and ideas as they proceeded through the units based on the individual needs of students and also share them with other colleagues. Topping (1989) used peer tutoring and paired reading to support literacy development. He concluded that both strategies together provided an opportunity for the "at-risk" student to use read aloud approaches, as well as encouragement and reinforcement approaches from the tutor. Hand in hand, these strategies bring about a change in improving reading skills of not only poor readers, but advanced readers as well.

The fourth finding indicated that when the sixth grade teachers reported 579 positive comments to parents during the implementation, the teachers committed themselves to the best of their abilities, to make some improvement in the communication system to parents. As it was mentioned earlier in the results section, teachers have very little time during the run of a school day to include all the variables needed to bring about the successful learning of students. They have to plan, teach, attend faculty meetings, attend team meetings, discipline students, act as counselors, sometimes nurses, collaborate with the administration (at unexpected times), attend state/district mandated meetings, take certification exams, go through assessments, and last, but not least, contact parents for conferences, meetings, or field trips. Again, where does the time come in to be a successful teacher and meet the needs of the students? Parents are the most important factors in the child's educational life. Teachers must make the time to include them in the educational process. Without them, very little success will be noted in the children whom they teach.

According to Chapman (1991), it is the responsibility of the school to communicate with parents to inform them of programs, special activities, and above all, their child's progress in school. He also concluded that, whenever possible, the schools should communicate with the local community, business leaders, and other persons who are interested in supporting the educational programs of today's youth. By doing so, the channels of communication remain open, commitments are derived, and partnerships are formed.

As of this writing, this school setting has set-up a "homework hotline" to communicate not only to parents of "at-risk" students, but to all parents of students who are enrolled in sixth, seventh, and eighth grades of their daily assignments and directions. Reports indicate that the hotline is being used successfully by parents and students, and the district is looking forward to providing the service to other parents in other middle schools next school year.

D'Angelo and Adler (1991) supported literacy development through the communication system of conferences, local radio stations, videos, telephones, and written (tips, newsletters, notes, etc.) communications. They acknowledged that although this system was set-up to improve parental communications between Chapter I teachers and parents, this system would also improve any programs' communication and establish a sound partnership. The writer contributes the origination of the "homework hotline" in the school to the collaborative conversations that were held by the writer and the principal concerning a need of some program to help students improve in school. Although, funds were not available at the time, perseverance paid off in the long run.

The school was the first to establish the hotline in the district.

The last finding indicated that 67% of the parents represented at least one of the 60 "at-risk" students at the session and, therefore, increased parental involvement in the educational process. Nevertheless, the parenting session did experience an attendance drop of 25%. This decline was attributed, as mentioned earlier, to a lack of stability often found in military communities. The parents are constantly moving because of transfers, service connected obligations, and other military reasons. However, the writer is convinced that the percentage of parents who did attend the sessions made a major impact in improving student learning. Moreover, effective parental involvement in activities do not stop here. Funding from state, local and national agencies are needed to get the accurate percentage of parents involved in the learning process.

Epstein (1987) warned that "words about the importance of parent involvement are meaningless without financial and technical support." According to Solomon (1991), "effective family/school partnerships may very well be essential for helping more students to reach the ambitious education goals that the nation has set for the year of 2000" "but unless a parent involvement initiative be an integral (but clearly defined) part of every state's school improvement strategy this goal will not be achieved."

As a result of the statements mentioned above by outstanding professionals in support of parent involvement, the writer is assured that the percentage of parent participants in school related activities should not be the total determining factor in indicating an increase or improvement in parental involvement. Instead, acquiring funds to develop, organize, and establish programs that would effectively strengthen the family/school relationship for years to come would show a significant increase in the support of educational learning.

After analyzing the results of the entire staff development program designed to support literacy development of poor readers in the regular classroom, the writer concludes that the program was indeed a significant support system. Inasmuch as the writer wanted to present a flawless program, it was unrealistic to assume that this could be done. Nevertheless, when looking at the program, it did indeed have strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (S.W.O.T.'s).

In the area of strengths and opportunities, the program utilized volunteers for speakers from various professions, colleges, and agencies who work as teachers, counselors, and directors of programs. In addition, the program provided knowledge about modern teaching approaches, when to use other professionals in the educational process, how to communicate with parents, how to use technology in the classroom, how to set standards for classroom behavior, and much more. The teachers committed themselves voluntarily to the implementation to the end and reported outstanding results that they had achieved with their students in the classroom from their newly acquired knowledge. Last, but not least, the parent session component provided an abundance of strategies, tips, and awareness for parents to use at home to help their children in the educational process.

No one expects a newly designed program to cure the academic ills of a public school in eight months. It takes time, planning, commitment from everyone concerned, and most of all, financial support. However, in this state, the legislative session reports indicate that there exists a major threat to staff development programs. This could affect many teachers who are in need of extra training and cannot afford to spend their personal monies on college or university tuitions. The writer recognizes a lack of funding as a potential threat in the future, but did not realize it would take place as early as the 1991-1992 school year.

As educators, one remedy would be to explore other avenues for funding support. Anytime you have state legislators who mandate that remedial education should only exist in grades K-fifth, and 10-12, thereby eliminating middle grades, sixth through ninth, unless the schools qualify for special funding, the "at-risk" students are in jeopardy. Therefore, the responsibility of acquiring the funds for the local schools should start with the leadership roles of the principals. Each principal should make an early identification of the "at-risk" students within the school, and write to appropriate grant agencies to secure innovative grants to provide the necessary programs to facilitate learning in their schools.

Finally, the writer is fortunate to report only two weaknesses, or disappointing situations, that occurred during the implementation. First, the rescheduling of the inservice sessions to accommodate the speakers due to prior commitments. Second, the parents voting to attend one three-hour inservice session, instead of three one-hour sessions after the sessions had been planned.

Recommendations

Before a significant impact can be made on a group of "at-risk" adolescents in middle grades, the supporting program must provide the following recommendations derived from the practicum results:

1. Middle schools should provide early identification of "at-risk" students and their needs
2. Middle schools should provide the appropriate response to learning needs (counseling, tutoring, remedial programs, alternative education, and other related programs)
3. Staff development programs should be incorporated into every middle school curriculum and should reflect the needs of teachers, parents, and students.
4. Teachers should be made aware of positive ways to communicate with parents
5. Teachers should be made aware of modern approaches to reading instruction (whole language, paired reading, read aloud activities, cooperative learning, questioning techniques, learning styles, and technology, etc.)
6. Whenever the acquisition of funding is a problem, administrators within the local school should take the leadership

role of communicating with agencies to secure funds needed to establish programs for students

7. Teachers should be made aware of the services that the other professionals can render in the educational process

8. Middle schools should develop effective parental involvement programs based on the needs of parents, and funding should be made available by the state or local district, if possible

9. Middle schools should provide each classroom teacher accessibility to televisions, video equipment, tape recorders, projectors, and computers to facilitate the various learning styles

10. Middle schools should provide each classroom teacher accessibility to children's literature to supplement the basal reading program

11. Middle schools should provide teachers an opportunity to share ideas and strategies proven successful in their classrooms

12. Teachers should understand the developmental characteristics of the 11-14 year old

13. Middle schools should operate under strategic plans supported by a philosophy that bases all decisions on the physical, intellectual, emotional, and social characteristics of early adolescents

14. Middle schools should, when possible, house staff development sessions in other settings such as (homes, conference rooms, and community centers, etc.) to make them more exciting and challenging to the participants

The writer acquired an array of staff development packets in support of literacy development in schools during the implementation of the practicum. It is hoped that the material presented to the staff development director will be used as an impetus to inspire future teachers and administrators to continue their industrious efforts in bringing about a solution to the problem.

Dissemination

The results gathered from this practicum will be published in the superintendent's newsletter. The newsletter is presented to teachers throughout the district on a monthly basis. Also the writer, with the assistance of the principal, will submit a grant proposal to the State Department of Innovative Grants for $345,000.00 to support literacy development in middle schools where funding is not available. The practicum will be transformed to a Literacy Assistant Program ("L.A.P.") designed to improve literacy development of "at-risk" students in middle grades, to empower classroom teachers in supporting literacy development processes for middle grade students, and to increase parental involvement in the educational process. The program will provide staff development sessions for teachers and parents, tutoring, modern technology, counseling sessions for teachers, parents, students, and transportation for three years. Finally, with the assistance of the writer's practicum adviser, the writer will submit, at a later date, an article for publication detailing the practicum.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT CARD STANDARDS

SCHOOL DISTRICT REPORT CARD STANDARDS

93 - 100 = A

92 - 85 = B

84 - 77 = C

76 - 70 = D

69 and below - F

NOTE: - Students who fail to achieve 77% on their report cards in their content subjects are classified as "at-risk" students.

APPENDIX B

PARENT INVOLVEMENT SURVEY RESULTS

PARENT READING INVOLVEMENT SURVEY - SIXTH GRADE

(#60 Subjects)

Directions:

After each question below, check Yes, No, or Sometimes, to indicate your awareness and involvement in your child's reading process.

	YES	NO	SOMETIMES	TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
1. Are you aware that your child may be performing below standard levels in reading and other related subjects?				
2. Do you communicate with your child's teacher in a effort to support or improve your child's performance in school?				
3. Do you get involved with school related activities such as PTO, volunteering, or tutoring?				
4. Do you take or make provisions to help your child with his assignments?				
5. Would parental sessions and newsletters be beneficial to you in solving these issues?				

APPENDIX C

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT RESULTS

Directions for Completing Needs Assessment Survey

1. Schedule meeting with your assigned group.

2. At group meeting, distribute handouts, explain purpose of survey, and describe how they are to be completed.

3. Set deadline and procedures for getting the completed forms returned to you.

4. Summarize the needs assessment surveys:

    A. To do this, take a blank needs assessment survey form. Make tally marks that represent how your teachers responded to the survey.

    Example:

The Teaching of Reading:	NO NEED	SOME NEED	STRONG NEED
		𝍸 ||	𝍸 𝍸

(NOTE: Do not Compile the NO NEED column. We will assume that those without Some Need or Strong Need will have No Need.

B. After completing the tallying process, take another blank needs assessment survey form. On this form, fill in numbers summarizing the responses of your teachers.

Example:

The Teaching of Reading:	NO NEED	SOME NEED	STRONG NEED
		7	10

RETURN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO THE SIXTH GRADE CHAIRPERSON, MRS. W. E. SPEIGHTS.

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY

Possible Topics

Directions: Below is a list of possible staff development topics. Please indicate how much interest you have in each one by checking one of the boxes at the left of the topic. Please feel free to add other topics in the space provided.

Level of Interest

	No Need	Some Need	Strong Need	
1.	____	____	____	Cooperative Learning, Whole Language, Paired Reading, Learning Styles, Tutoring, and Questioning Techniques in the reading program
2.	____	____	____	Computer Assisted Instruction
3.	____	____	____	Nature and Needs of Middle School Learners
4.	____	____	____	Effective Teaching Techniques
5.	____	____	____	The Remedial Reader
6.	____	____	____	Assessment and Individualized Reading Instruction
7.	____	____	____	Organization and Management of the Classroom
8.	____	____	____	Motivating Students to Read
9.	____	____	____	Parental Involvement and Communication in the Reading Programs
10.	____	____	____	Involving the Community in the Reading Program
11.	____	____	____	Methodology of Teaching Reading in the Content Areas
12.	____	____	____	Working with Colleagues and other Paraprofessionals
13.	____	____	____	The Writing Process and Reading

Level of Interest

	No Need	Some Need	Strong Need	
14.	____	____	____	Utilization of Audio-Visual Aids and Equipment
15.	____	____	____	Utilization of Test Data to Improve Instruction
				Other Topics
16.	____	____	____	____
17.	____	____	____	____
18.	____	____	____	____
19.	____	____	____	____
20.	____	____	____	____

APPENDIX D

TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY RESULTS

TEACHER NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY - SIXTH GRADE

(#8 Subjects)

Directions:

After each question below, check Yes, No, or Sometimes, to indicate your needs in the reading program.

	YES	NO	SOMETIMES	TOTAL NO. OF PARTICIPANTS
1. Are you aware that students are performing below standard levels in reading in your class?				
2. Does the school provide remedial services for these students?				
3. Do you provide services in your classroom? Why?				
4. Do you receive support from parents concerning student performance?				
5. Do parents render involvement services such as volunteering, tutoring, or PTO?				
6. Would a training inservice be beneficial to you in solving these issues?				

APPENDIX E

STAFF DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR PLAN

STAFF DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR PLAN

"New Approaches and Strategies In Teaching Reading"

Staff Development Sessions

Revised

August ---------------- Month One -------------------- 8/22/90

"Why Is Discipline Important In The Reading Program?"

Topics to be discussed:

1. What Is Discipline and How To Set the Standards For Discipline
2. The Use of Classroom Management Strategies to Stop Inappropriate Behaviors
3. The Causes of Discipline Problems
    - a. The Student
    - b. The Teacher
    - c. The Situation
4. Evaluation

September ------------- Month Two ------------------- 9/12/90

"New Approaches of Reading Instruction" - (Teachers Only)

Topics to be discussed:

1. Cooperative Learning
2. Whole Language
3. Paired Reading
4. Learning Styles
5. Tutoring (Peer, Volunteer, cross-age)
6. Questioning Techniques
7. Evaluation

"How Parents Can Help Their Children In the Educational Process"

(Parents Only) 9/19/90

Topics to be discussed:

1. Modeling Good Reading Habits
2. Reading Aloud to Children Regardless of Age
3. Taking Children to the Library
4. Develop a Reading Library at Home
5. Homework Assistance
6. Help Develop Self-Esteem
7. Use Learning Games
8. Use Modern Technology At Home When Available (Television, Tape Recorders, VCR's, and Computer)
9. Evaluation

October ---------------- Month Three ------------------ 10/10/90

"Using the Library To Teach Reading In The Regular Classroom" - (Teachers Only)

Topics to be discussed:

1. Using Interest Inventories
2. Children's Literature in Reading Instruction
3. Trade Books in Reading Instruction
4. Magazine in Reading Instruction
5. Newspaper in Reading Instruction
6. Book Reports in Reading Instruction
7. Evaluation

November --------------- Month Four ------------------- 11/7/90

"Using the Technology Connection In the Regular Classroom Instruction" - (Teachers Only)

Topics to be discussed:

1. The History of Computer Instruction
2. Using Computers to Teach Basic Reading Skills
3. Using Computers to Keep Progress Report Records of Students
4. Using Computers for Individualized Instruction
5. Evaluation

December --------------- Month Five --------------------12/12/90

"When to use Your Colleagues and Other Professionals In The Educational Process"- (Teachers Only)

Topics to be discussed:

1. Guidance Counselors
2. School Psychologist
3. Speech/Hearing Specialist
4. Remedial Teachers/Chapter 1
5. Special Education Teachers
6. A Concern Issue, What is Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D.)?
7. Evaluation

January ---------------- Month Six --------------------- 1/9/91

"How To Communicate with Parents in the Educational Process" - (Teachers Only)

Topics to be discussed:

1. Conferences
2. Progress Reports/Report Cards
3. Community Meetings
4. Newsletter
5. Telephone
6. Calendars/tips
7. Evaluation

February --------------- Month Seven ------------------- 2/13/91

"Grand Finale"

Teachers Finale Session

Share - A - Thon Activities

1. Teachers will describe at least two new strategies that they have tried with success in their classrooms.
2. Teachers will report results of monthly reading aloud to their children.
3. Teachers will report the results of positive comments made to parents.

March ---------------- Month Eight -----------------------

Evaluation

1. Collect, analyze, and tabulate attendance record results
2. Collect, analyze, and tabulate log results of daily reading, to students and positive comments to parents
3. Collect, analyze, and tabulate results of surveys taken after each staff development session
4. Write the Final Report
5. Submit Report to Practicum director and adviser

APPENDIX F

LOG BOOKLET

ATTENDANCE

DATE	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.
1st							
2nd							
3rd							
4th							
5th							
6th							
7th							
8th							
9th							
10th							
11th							
12th							
13th							
14th							
15th							
16th							
17th							
18th							
19th							
20th							
21st							
22nd							
23rd							
24th							
25th							
26th							
27th							
28th							
29th							
30th							
31st							

DAILY READING TO STUDENTS

DATE	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.
1st							
2nd							
3rd							
4th							
5th							
6th							
7th							
8th							
9th							
10th							
11th							
12th							
13th							
14th							
15th							
16th							
17th							
18th							
19th							
20th							
21st							
22nd							
23rd							
24th							
25th							
26th							
27th							
28th							
29th							
30th							
31st							

MONTHLY READING TO STUDENTS

MONTH	# OF TIMES
AUGUST	
SEPTEMBER	
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	
JANUARY	
FEBRUARY	

MONTHLY CORRESPONDENCE TO PARENTS WITH POSITIVE COMMENTS

MONTH	# OF TIMES
AUGUST	
SEPTEMBER	
OCTOBER	
NOVEMBER	
DECEMBER	
JANUARY	
FEBRUARY	

STRATEGIES USED IN THE CLASSROOM

List below the two strategies used in the classroom during the implementation of the staff development sessions. Explain in detail the purpose of your selection, steps, and possible results.

1.

2.

APPENDIX G

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS CONCERNING PERFORMANCE

To the Parents of ____

From ______________________________, Teacher

RE: Performance In School Acknowledgement

Date: ______________________________

Subject: ____

Note

Dear Parents,

Communication between home and school is vital to your child's success in the classroom. Therefore, since you were unable to attend the scheduled conference, I am enclosing a progress report and some strategies that will enable you to assist your child at home.

Please take the time to review and discuss the report with your child and return the bottom portion back to me the next school day.

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

____

Enclosures

Performance Report:

Strategies To Be Used At Home:

Detach

Parent's Signature ______________________________ Child's Signature ______________________________

Please Return To

Teacher's Name ______________________________

Date ______________________________

APPENDIX H

SAMPLE OF THE "FLIP BOOK STRATEGY" AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER

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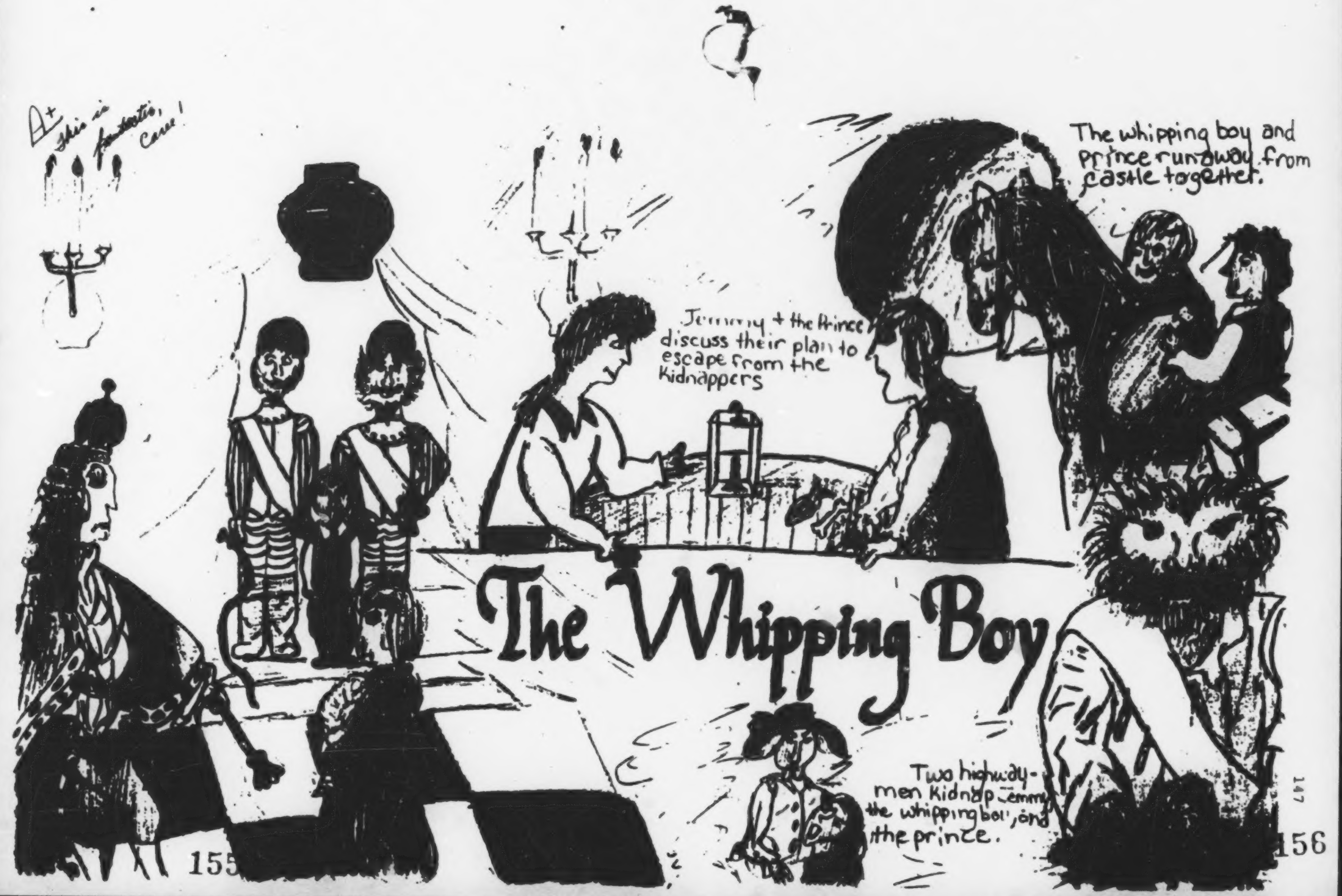
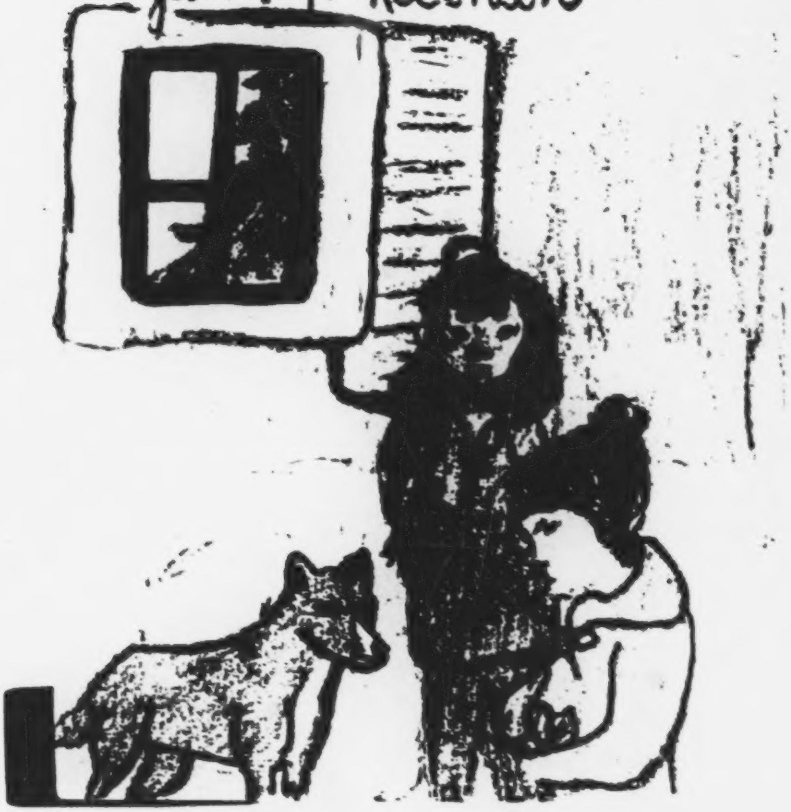
A+ This is fantastic, Carrie!


The Whipping Boy
Jemmy + the Prince discuss their plan to escape from the kidnappers
The whipping boy and prince runaway from castle together.
Two highway-men kidnap Jemmy the whipping boy, and the prince.

[redacted]

The Christmas Dog

Jan M. Robinson



[redacted]

[redacted]

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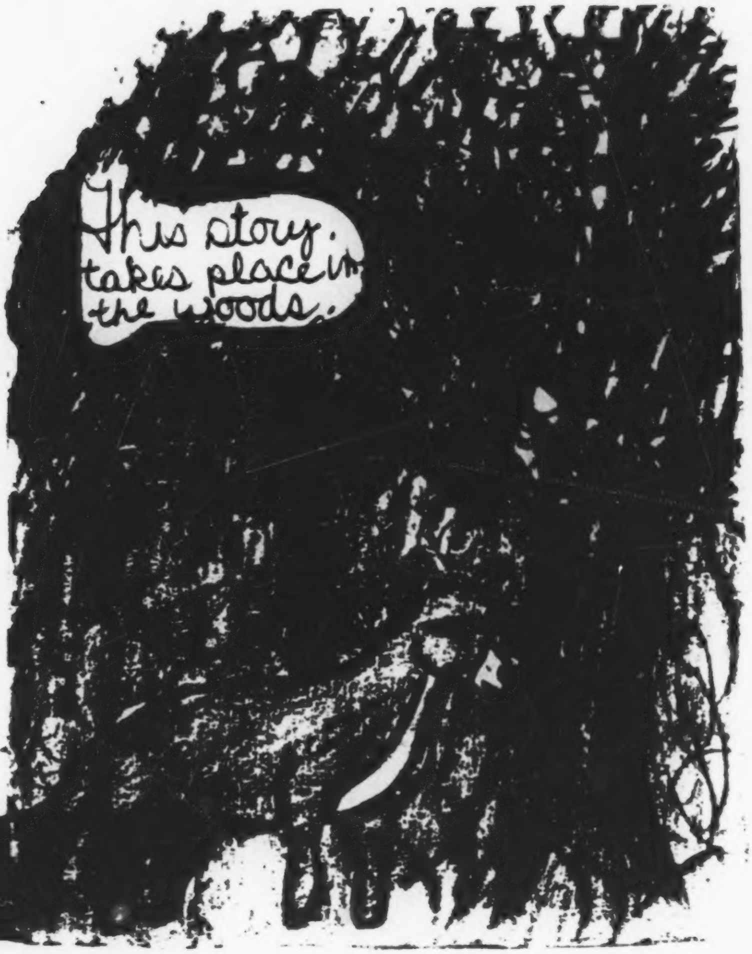
[redacted]

[redacted]


This story takes place in the woods.

[redacted]

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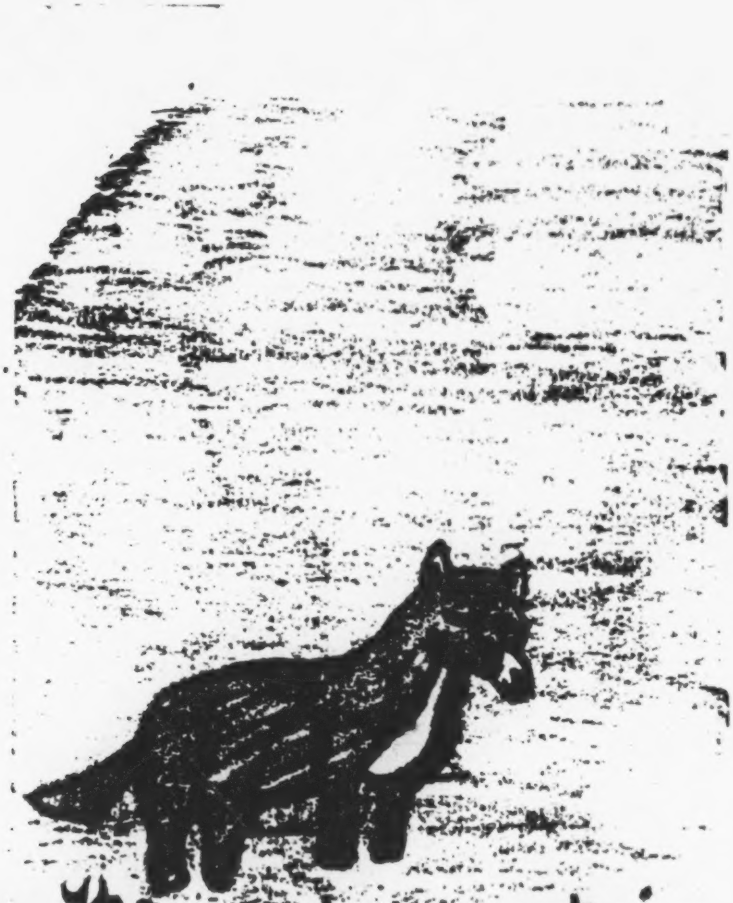
[redacted]



[redacted]

[redacted]

The main character in
this book was Kit, a dog.

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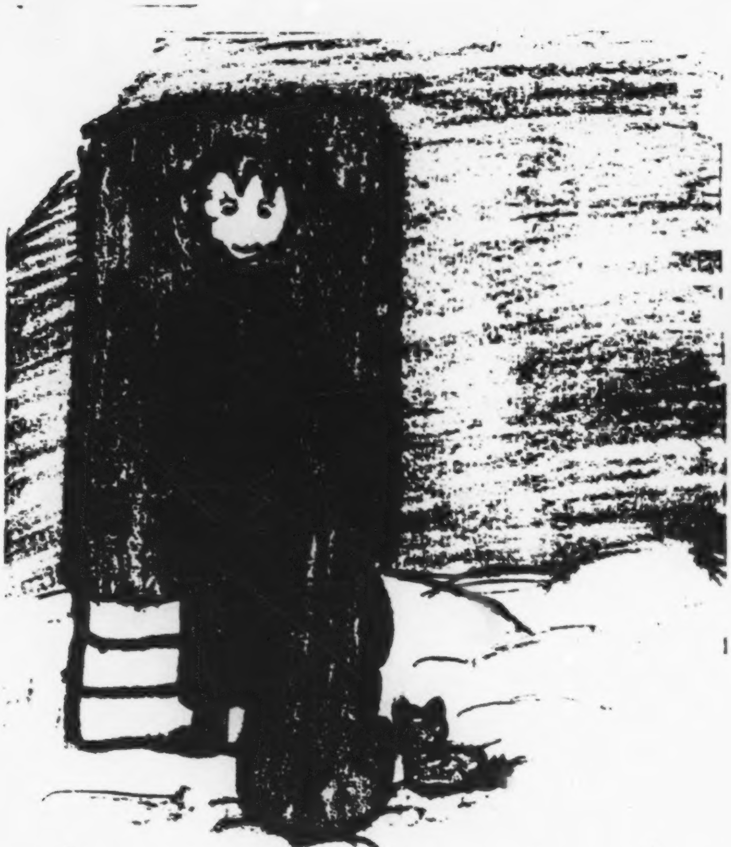
[redacted]



[redacted]

It was cold and Kit had to find food for herself and her puppy.

[redacted]

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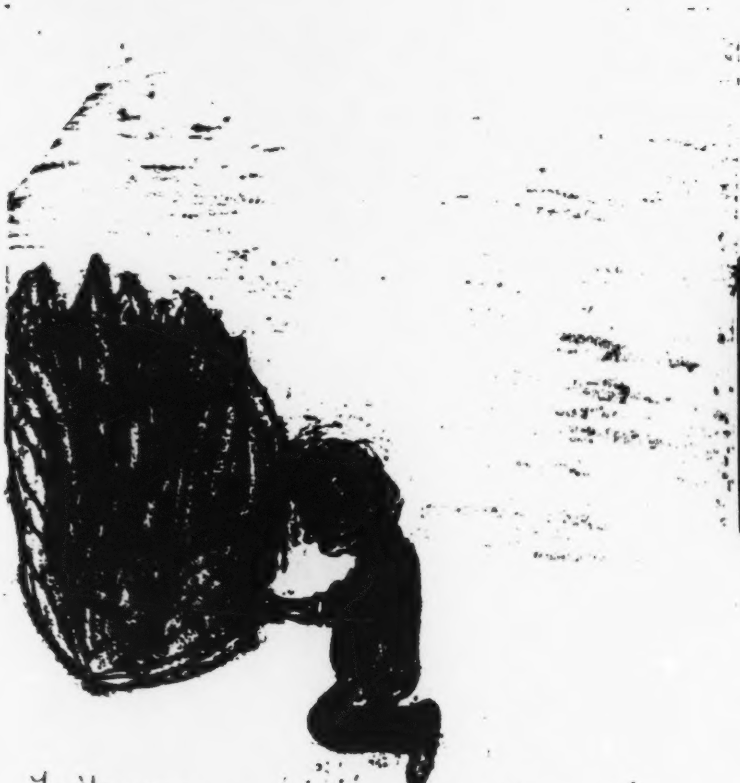
[redacted]



[redacted]

When a little boy, i [illegible]
Kit watching him from the tall
grasses.

[redacted]

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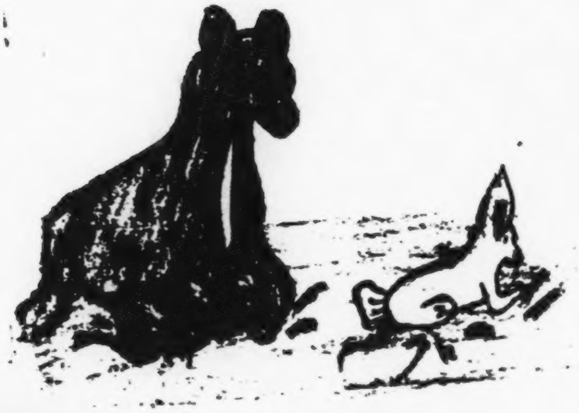
[redacted]

The kit chases
a rabbit.

[redacted]



[redacted]

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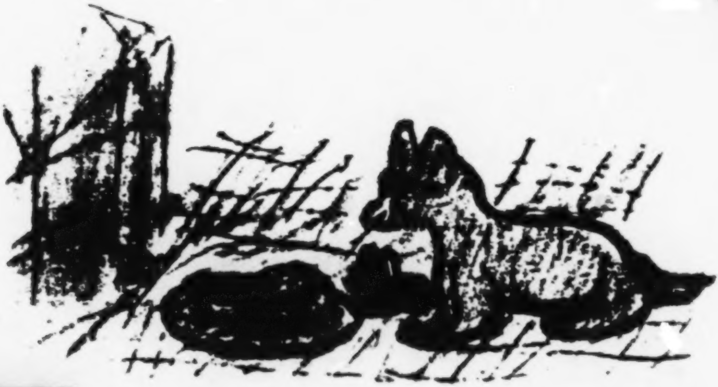
[redacted]

[illegible] and his sister
took kit and her pup
into the lawn and
gave them some meat.

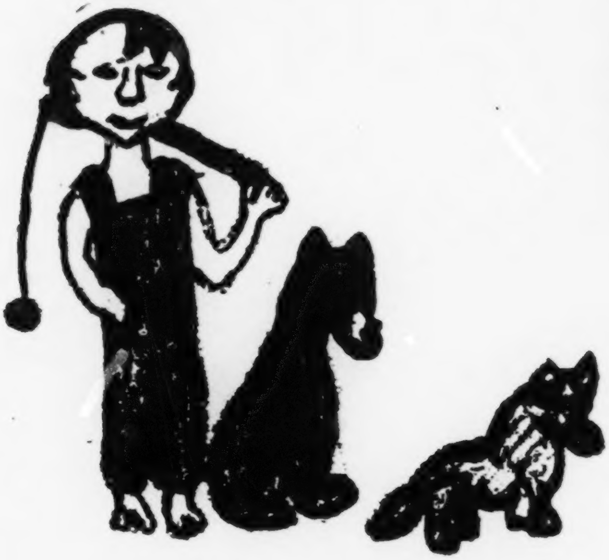
[redacted]



[redacted]

[redacted]

Jon kept the
dogs and raised
them.



[redacted]

[redacted]

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April 8, 1991

Authorization Letter

TO: Nova University
Center For The Advancement of Education
Practicum Department - Ed.D. Programs In
Early and Middle Childhood Education

FROM: Judy Kern, Teacher
Caree Dagley, Student

RE: Authorization to Use "Sample of the Flip Book Report"

NOTE: This is to certify that Wilhelmenia E. Speights has permission to use the sample of the "Flip Book Report" in the Practicum II Report.

Judy Kern
Judy Kern, Teacher

Caree Dagley
Caree Dagley, Student

APPENDIX I

MONTHLY CALENDAR OF SKILLS

MONTHLY CALENDAR OF SKILLS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Sequence Read a Short Story to your child. Have him/her tell, in order, 3 things that happened in the story. 30.)	Index Have your child turn to the index in a text book. Select a topic and have him/her tell on which page that topic may be found. 1.)	Syllables Send your child on a word hunt in the kitchen to find (2) Syllable words on Cans and packages. Have him/her make a list of ⑩ Words. 2.)	Word meanings Using the Crossword Puzzle from a Newspaper, have your child choose 5 clues and write a word for each one. 3.)	Synonyms Have your child choose 10 words from the Newspaper and write a Synonym for each one. 4.)	Antonyms Have your child write the opposite of each word: wild right gather bottom save alike child clear bold 5.)	Context clues Have your child read a newspaper article, circle any unknown words and tell you what they think the circle word means. 6.)
Fact/Opinion Have your child read a Newspaper editorial page article, copy 1 sentence that is a Fact, and 1 sentence that is an opinion. 7.) Fact - True opinion - What You believe	Conclusions Start a story and have your child complete it. Ask them what clues were used to complete the story. 8.)	Suffixes Have your child select ⑩ words from a textbook containg Suffixes, then write another word with each of the same Suffixes. 9.)	Root words Make a card for each of the following: hunt, cook, seek, think, love, -er, -ing, -ine, -ly. Have your child match words and endings as quickly as possible. 10.)	Prefixes From the Newspaper have your child circle 10 words that have the prefix re- and write the meanings using the dictionary. 11.)	Alphabetical order Have your child select 10 words from the Newspaper, and write them in abc order. 12.)	Bar Graphs Using the following facts, have your child make a bar graph: Favorite Ice Cream 5 like chocolate 4 like Vanilla 6 like Strawberry 13.)
Directions Have your child tell you the directions he/she thinks you should follow when cooking your Memorial Day Meal. 14.)	Classify Words Have your child find words in a Newspaper which can be classified into one of these groups: Jobs Cities 15.)	Main Idea Have your child read a paragraph from a favorite book. Ask them to tell or write the Main Idea of the paragraph. 16.)	Dictionary skills Have your child use the dictionary to find Meanings of these words: Obnoxious, chagrin, contrite. Have them use each Word in a Sentence. 17.)	Synonyms Have your child look at a picture in a magazine and write words to describe what they see. Have them to write a Synonym for each word. 18.)	Sequence Have your child read a story from a favorite book. Tell them to write the events in order from 1 - 7, according to the happenings. 19.)	Main Idea Have your child collect pictures from magazine to illustrate a particular theme, such as Baseball, Spring, Sports, Cars, People. Have them write a main Idea Paragraph for each. 20.)
Fact/opinion Have your child look at cereal boxes, canned vegetables, and Frozen Foods. Have them write down all the factual information they can find. 21.)	Comparison/contrast Have your Child define these words using the dictionary. Have them Write 5 sentences using Comparison/contrast. 22.)	Homonyms Have your child look in a favorite book. Tell them to write 5 words and their homonyms. Ex. 1. blue - blew. Tell them to use each word correctly in a Sentence. 23.)	Locating Information Have your child look up 10 Names in the phone book. (Friends, relatives, etc.) Have them Write and Classify: Addresses Phone # 24.)	Skim for Details Pick out some information in a letter, bill, or a note. Make up questions so that your child can write or tell you the information. 25.)	Main Idea Tell your child to read 3 comic strips from the Newspaper and write the main Idea of each. 26.)	Indexes Help your child locate Information in an index of a book. 27.)

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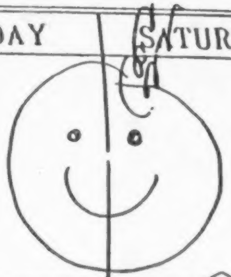
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Synonyms Tell your child to write a synonym that begins with "L" for these words: worn, woman, permit, same, go, big, giggle. 28.)	Affixes Have you child find words with these affixes. un, re, dis, less, ness, ful. Tell them to write the meaning of each word. 29.)	Creative Writing Have your child write 2 paragraphs describing how they feel about the Calendar skills and you helping them. 30.)	GET			

Study Daily!

INVOLVED PARENTS,

BE Positive Build A Better Child!

HELP Your CHILDREN

REACH For Excellence

LEARN TO READ!!!

Designed by,
Mrs. W. C. Speights

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LOG

DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:	DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:
DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:	DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:
DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:	DATE: ____ SKILL: ____ RESULTS:

APPENDIX J

DISCIPLINE IN THE READING PROGRAM SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

"Discipline in the Reading Program"

1. Was the session presented in a clear organized manner?

Yes No Sometimes

2. Will you be able to use any of the strategies presented in your classroom?

Yes No Sometimes

3. Do you feel that the session should be offered each school year for teachers?

Yes No Sometimes

4. Are you a lead-manager or boss-manager?

Yes No Sometimes

5. Did the session provide enough modeling or other interactions to achieve its goal?

Yes No Sometimes

APPENDIX K

NEW APPROACHES OF READING INSTRUCTION SESSION SURVEY AND AUTHORIZATION LETTER

NEW APPROACHES OF READING INSTRUCTION

Evaluation Form

In order to provide workshops that are meaningful and pertinent to your needs, we would appreciate your sincere responses to the following questions:

Instructor:____________________ Date:__________

Please rate the following:

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
A. Quality of Instruction	☐	☐	☐	☐
B. Usefulness of information and skills	☐	☐	☐	☐
C. Relevance of information	☐	☐	☐	☐
D. Preparation of instructor	☐	☐	☐	☐
E. Organization of presentation	☐	☐	☐	☐
F. Overall effectiveness of workshop	☐	☐	☐	☐

How does this workshop compare with others you have had?

☐ the best ☐ among the best ☐ comparable ☐ not as good

One positive aspect of this inservice was____________________

I recommended that this instructor present workshops again in my district. ☐ Yes ☐ No

Name____________________

Address ____________________

City ________________ State ______ Zip ______

Social Security Number ____________________

Teacher/Grade ________ Administrator ________ Other ________

COMMENTS:

April 12,1991

To: Nova University
Ed. Doctorate Early-Middle Childhood
Director of Practicums.

From: Wilhelmenia E. Speights WESp.

Re: To use Evaluation Form
"New Modern Approaches of Reading Instruction"

Note: Attached is a permission note, from Majorie Donato, to use the evaluation form listed above.

I give permission for J. E. Speights to use the evaluation form from the New Modern Approaches of Reading Instruction inservice.

Marjorie Donato

Marjorie Donato

APPENDIX L

HOW PARENTS CAN HELP THEIR CHILDREN IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

"How Parents Can Help Their Children in the Educational Process"

1. Was the session presented in a clear organized fashion?

   Yes No

2. Were the topics discussed interesting to you?

   Yes No

3. Did the session provide enough information, so that you would be more effective in assisting your child at home in the educational process?

   Yes No

4. Would you and other parents benefit from a session of this nature on a yearly basis?

   Yes No

5. Do you feel that parents should model good reading and study habits for their children?

   Yes No

APPENDIX M

USING THE LIBRARY TO SUPPORT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN THE REGULAR CLASSROOM SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

"Using the Library to Support Literacy in the Regular Classroom"

1. Was the material presented in a logical, orderly, and appropriate manner?

   Yes No Sometimes

2. Do you feel that the material presented to you could be useful in your classroom?

   Yes No Sometimes

3. Do you feel that media centers are an integral component in the schools, and did the instructor give you the impression that classrooms should also provide available reading materials to their students?

   Yes No Sometimes

4. Do you feel students have an attitude about reading?

   Yes No Sometimes

5. Did the lecturer provide a Reading Attitude Survey?

   Yes No Sometimes

6. In conclusion, was the content appropriate for the grade level which is taught?

   Yes No Sometimes

APPENDIX N

THE TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION SESSION SURVEY

THE TECHNOLOGY CONNECTION

EVALUATION

Please evaluate the session on technology's role in using computers in the regular classroom to reinforce reading skills of the at-risk students. Please use the rating scale of 0-5 with 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest rating of agreement.

1. The session gave me some ideas that I could utilize in the regular classroom to reinforce the reading skills of at-risk students.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

2. The session was interesting.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

3. The speaker spoke clearly and was enthused about his/her subject.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

4. The speaker appeared knowledgeable in the subject area and seemed to be well-prepared.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

5. I feel more comfortable about working with computers with my students after this session.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

6. I feel that reading skills can be improved with the help of technology.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

7. I will try some of the ideas presented in this session with my students.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

8. The packet of materials presented to me at the session improved my learning and were interesting and applicable to the support of literacy development.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

9. I feel the session was beneficial to my goal of helping to reinforce reading skills of at-risk students in the regular classroom.

   0 1 2 3 4 5

10. I feel that the question and answering period was adequately presented by the speaker, and that the answers were given to the best of the speaker's knowledge.

    0 1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX O

WHEN TO USE YOUR COLLEAGUES AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS IN THE EDUCATION PROCESS SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

1. Do you feel that the information you received from this session will be benefical to you in supporting literacy development in the regular classroom?
   Yes _______ No _______

   Why?____
   ____
   ____

2. After attending this session do you feel that you know better who to direct problems in your classroom to?
   Yes _______ No _______

3. Please list the specialists serving your school.
   ____
   ____
   ____

4. What are the areas in which your school has alternative programs and resources available to you?
   ____
   ____
   ____

5. How can the counselor and the psychologist help you develop a goal directed approach to academic difficulties in your classroom?
   ____
   ____

APPENDIX P

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH PARENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

"How To Communicate with Parents in the Educational Process"

1. Was the session very informative, somewhat informative, or not informative? Explain

2. Did the session help you in anyway to understand how to communicate better with your students' parents? Explain

3. Did the speaker present the session in a clear organized fashion? Explain

4. Do you feel that other teachers would benefit from a session of this nature on a yearly basis? Explain

5. How well did you enjoy the session? Explain

APPENDIX Q

STAFF DEVELOPMENT COMPONENT SESSION SURVEY

EVALUATION

Staff Development Sessions

Title - "New Approaches and Strategies for Teaching Reading"

Directions - Please answer the questions honestly about the overall effectiveness of the Staff Development Plan.

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1. Organization/Presentation				
2. Usefullness/Relevance of information				
3. Quality of Instruction				
4. Preparation of Speakers				
5. Individual Packets for future use (strategies, definitions, Journal articles, etc.)				
6. Environmental change (site of sessions) Held in homes instead of the school when applicable				
7. Overall effectiveness of sessions				
8. Share - a - thon				

List one significant strength of the Staff Development Plan. ____________________

____

List one significant weakness of the Staff Development Plan. ____________________

____